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A Novel.

BY

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TO

MY ESTEEMED FRIENDS,

Francis S. Street and Francis S. Smith,

Editors of the New York Wesley,

TO WHOM

I AM INDEBTED FOR SO MANY KINDNESSES IN THE PAST,

I DEDICATE

THIS STORY.

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EDITH LYLE.

INTRODUCTORY.

BY ESTHER OLIVIA ARMSTRONG.

AS I sit here, this bright autumnal morning, and from the window of my room look out upon the river winding its way to the sea, there falls upon my ears the merry chime of bells from the tower of the old gray church,—wedding bells they are,—and their echoes float across the water, and up the mountain side, and then die away among the wooded cliffs beyond, where the foliage has just been touched with the October frost, and has here and there a gay trimming of scarlet and gold on its summer dress of green. There is a wedding at St. Luke's to-day, and the bridal party is passing now and I kiss my hand to the beautiful bride, who flashes a smile at me from those wonderful eyes of hers,—eyes so like in expression to those of the elder lady who sits beside her, and but for whom that wedding at St. Luke's would never have been. They are gone now from my sight, and only the pealing of the bells is heard in the quiet street, and as I muse upon the strange event which has made the people of our town wild with excitement and curiosity, and of which I, perhaps, know quite as much as any one, I ask myself, "Why not write out the story, suppressing names, and dates, and localities, and give it to the world, as a proof that real life is sometimes stranger than fiction."

And so, just as the sound of the marriage-bells dies away among the distant hills, I take my pen to begin a tale which

will have in it no part of my own life, save as it was sometimes interwoven with the lives of those whose history I write. *I* am only Esther Armstrong, the village school-mistress, a plain, old-fashioned woman of thirty-five, with no incident whatever in my life worth recording ; and so, with no thought that any one will accuse me of egotism or conceit, I write down

CHAPTER I.,

AND CALL IT ABELARD.



HE Schuylers were of Holland descent, and had married and intermarried in England and America, and had in their family a title, it was said, and they boasted of their Dutch blood, and English blood, and American blood, and, like the famous Miss McBride, "were proud of their money and proud of their pride," and proud to be known as "the Schuylers of New York," who had for so many years kept themselves free from anything approaching to plebeianism, and whose wealth and importance had been steadily on the increase since the first English Schuyler left his ancestral halls in Lincolnshire across the sea. But the race was gradually dying out, and the only male member of the direct line in America was Colonel Howard, a proud, reticent man, who, a few years before my story opens, had married Miss Emily Rossiter, a lady fully up to the Schuyler standard of moral and social worth.

It was true she brought with her a plain face and a brain not overburdened with ideas, but she added to these the sum of two hundred thousand dollars and an exclusiveness which saw nothing outside her own narrow circle of friends. At the time of her marriage her husband, Colonel Howard Schuyler, who loved the fresh grass and the air from the hills better than brick walls and stony pavements, suggested that they should spend a portion of the summer at his country-seat on the river, but to this the lady would not listen. Hampstead was too quiet. Her

elegant laces, and satins, and diamonds, would be sadly out of place in that rustic neighborhood, she thought ; and so she went first to Europe, and then, season after season, to Newport and Saratoga, and had a cottage at Nahant, and climbed the White Mountains and the Catskills, and tired herself out in her pursuit of happiness, until, at last, broken in health and spirits, she signified a wish to go to Hampstead, where she could find the rest she needed.

And so one April day Colonel Schuyler came up to our little town with a whole army of workmen, who began at once their task of tearing down and rebuilding the old house, which had belonged to the Schuylers so long, and which latterly had been unoccupied and gradually going to decay. The house, which was very large, stood upon an eminence overlooking the town of Hampstead and the river below, and from this fact the place was known as Schuyler Hill, though for years and years not a Schuyler had lived there or manifested the slightest interest in it. There was a time, however, within my mother's memory, when all through the summer months high festival had been held at the old place by the Schuylers, whose graves were now in a little inclosure at the summit of the hill, where the tall evergreens were growing, and where the weather-stained headstones were, with their quaint devices and eulogies of people dead long before I was born. Sometimes on a bright summer afternoon I used to climb over the low railing into this yard, to gather the roses and sweet-brier which grew there in such profusion, and, seated on the grass, I would muse upon the dead folk who slept below, and wish so much for a return of the days of which my mother had told me, when the great house was full of high born people, who made the neighborhood so gay, and whose revellings were sometimes prolonged far into the night.

At last, however, there was a prospect of those days coming back again, and the whole town was alive with wonder and curiosity when it was known that not only was the old house to give way to a new and elegant modern structure, but that the family was really coming there to live a good portion of the year. Hampstead, which had slept so long, was alive now.

Property went up, and the people began to talk of a bank, and a new hotel, and sent a petition that the express trains from Albany should stop there, instead of thundering by on the wings of the wind with a snort and a scream, which I thought was tantalizing and impertinent in the extreme. Great, too, was the excitement and interest with regard to the new house, which, under swift and efficient workmen, grew so rapidly that, early in June, the framework of the tower could be seen above the tree-tops, and was watched eagerly by the curious villagers.

"Lady Emily," as her English maid always called her, came up one day to see the place and give some directions with regard to certain rooms intended expressly for herself, and with her came little Godfrey, her only son, a brown-eyed, sweet-faced boy not quite six years old. I remember just how they looked as they drove through the town in their open barouche, Lady Emily in her jaunty bonnet, which I thought too small and young for her pale, faded face, and little Godfrey in his velvet suit, with his long hair curling on his neck. He was a pleasant, sociable child, and soon made the acquaintance of all the workmen, but was best pleased with Abelard Lyle, the young Englishman who was employed upon the tower, and who at night, when his work was done, made wonderful wagons and carts for the pretty little lad. All day long Godfrey played about the building, and sometimes climbed the highest possible point, and stood watching the men at their work below. Especially was he delighted with the tower where Abelard was; and one morning, the third after his arrival at Hampstead, he mounted to a timber above the young man's head, where he stood waving his cap and hurrahing to his mother, who was driving leisurely about the grounds in her pony phaeton. She saw him, and with a frantic gesture of her hand motioned him to come down, while Abelard, too, called aloud to him and warned him of his danger. How it happened Godfrey never could explain. He only knew that he stepped backward and fell, that Abelard caught him by the arm and threw him with a desperate effort upon a narrow platform, where he lay unharmed, while his brave deliverer lay on the rubbish far below, a crushed, bleed-

ing thing! Only a thing now,—no life, no motion, no soul, for that had gone to God; and they took the limp, insensible object and laid it upon the grass, which was wet with the blood pouring from the deep wound upon the temple where a sharp stone had struck. Trembling with fear, little Godfrey came down the long ladders and across the piles of boards to the mutilated form upon the grass; and young as he was, he never forgot the look of the pale, dead face upturned to the summer sun.

“Oh father!” he cried, as Colonel Schuyler came up, “he caught me and throwd me onto the board, and tried to hold on hiraself, but couldn’t; and now he’s dead, and I liked him so much; what shall we do?”

They could do nothing but bear the poor youth to his boarding place near by, where they washed the blood and dirt from his stained face and matted hair, and then began to ask where he came from, and who his relatives were, if he had any. He was an English boy, and had not been long in the country, some one said; but nobody could tell anything definite concerning him or his friends, until there stepped from the crowd an elderly, dignified woman, whom the people recognized as Mrs. Fordham, a comparative stranger to them all. She, too, was English, and she knew the youth who had lost his own life in his efforts to save another. She had known him on the ship, she said. He had come to America in the same vessel with herself a few months before. If they liked, they could take him to her house and bury him from there, as she was the only acquaintance he seemed to have, and he had sometimes called upon her since coming to Hampstead. To this proposition the matron of the boarding-house assented eagerly. A dead body and a funeral were not at all to her taste, and besides she was not sure as to the pay she might receive for her trouble, and she thanked Mrs. Fordham so cordially, and evinced so strong a desire to be rid of her late boarder, that the matter was arranged at once, and Mrs. Fordham started for home to make ready for the dead man, who had been there only the night before, and had left her so full of life, and health, and hope for the untried future.

CHAPTER II.

HELOISE.

OF Mrs. Fordham but little was known in Hampstead at that time. She had only been with us since the first of May, and soon after her coming she had said that if she could not have the best society she would prefer to have none ; and as the so-called best society was a little shy of strangers and foreigners, she was left mostly to herself, and was seldom seen except at church, where she was a regular attendant, and where her daughter, a young girl of fifteen or more, attracted much attention by the exceeding beauty of her face, and the delicate refinement of her manner.

Subsequently we learned more of her history, which was as follows :

A native of Berwick, in England, she belonged to what might be called the "higher poor class." A nursery governess in her girlhood, she had come in constant contact with many high-born ladies who visited in the family of her employer, and whom she watched and imitated until there was in her manner a certain dignity and air of cultivation which marked her as different from others in her own rank of life. Exceedingly ambitious, she refused many an offer which her companions called good, and at the age of thirty was married to Henry Fordham, a poor curate, whose parish was on the Scottish border among the heather hills. Here, after three years of wedded life, she buried him and returned to her lonely home in Berwick, with one only child, a little girl, whom she called Edith Heloise.

As the daughter of a clergyman Edith was a born lady, and Mrs. Fordham felt all her old ambition revive, as she thought what her daughter might one day become,—a titled lady perhaps, and certainly the mistress of some rich man's home ; and to this end she was carefully secluded from the common people around her, and early taught to think that a brilliant future lay before her if she would follow implicitly the instructions of her

mother. From a distant relative Mrs Fordham had received a small annuity, on which she managed to live very comfortably until Edith, or Heloise, as she preferred to call her, was fifteen, when she determined upon emigrating to America, where her daughter's chances for a high social position were greater than in England.

In the same vessel with her was Abelard Lyle, a young carpenter from Alnwick, who was also going to seek his fortune in the western world. Arrived at New York he found employment at once on Col. Schuyler's house in Hampstead, whither, at his instigation, Mrs. Fordham removed early in May. She was wanting a cottage in the country, she said, and Abelard found one for her and persuaded her to take it, and attended himself to fitting it up, and stood waiting to welcome her when she came at last to take possession. Mrs. Fordham was very gracious and thanked him for his thoughtfulness, and said he was very good and she should not forget his kind interest in her; and yet there was in her manner something which he understood, and which made him doubly anxious to please and propitiate her. He was well enough as a friend and adviser, and during the voyage and after their arrival in New York, Mrs. Fordham had found it convenient to call upon him for help whenever she pleased, but she always managed to make him feel how immeasurable was the gulf between him and her daughter, whose servant he might be, but nothing more.

Heloise was wondrously beautiful, with an ease and grace about her which would have become a princess. From her father's side she had inherited "good blood," a fact which her mother kept constantly before her mind. And as she talked of the brilliant matches which had been made in the new world and could be made again, Heloise listened, at first quietly, with a peculiar look in her eyes and a bright flush on her cheek. Latterly, however, there had been a worried, anxious expression on her face when her mother was talking to her, and on the morning of which I write she had left her coffee untouched and stolen from the room so as not to hear what her mother was saying of Abelard Lyle. He had called upon them the previous night,

and stayed too long and seemed too much at home, Mrs. Fordham thought.

"He is a fine young man, I know, and I respect him very much," she said; "but he is only a carpenter, and I do not think it well to be very intimate with him. I saw you give him a rose. I wouldn't do it again, or encourage him to come here."

Mrs. Fordham was talking to herself now, for Heloise was in the garden, with her face turned toward Schuyler Hill, where the men were already at work. She could hear the sound of their hammers, as stroke after stroke fell upon the heavy timbers, and it seemed to her as if there were a low undertone of music in it all, especially in the strokes which rang out from the tall tower rising above the trees. There was a fascination about that tower; and all during the morning, while her mother, who had an errand in the village, was away, Heloise sat by the window, where she could see the square frame and the broad-shouldered figure upon it.

Once, when she felt sure the face was turned toward her, she waved her handkerchief, and was rewarded with a flourish in the air of the right arm, and then she knew that Abelard could see her; and she sat very still, and applied herself to the ruffle she was hemming, and thought such thoughts as made her cheeks the color of the rose she had given to Abelard the previous night.

And while she sat there thus, there was the sound of carriage-wheels, and Lady Emily Schuyler drove slowly down the road with her English maid in attendance. Heloise had seen the lady in church the day before, but instead of staring at her as the others had done, had shrunk from view, and was glad that she sat behind the Schuyler pew instead of in front of it. And now, as the carriage came near, she leaned back in her chair to avoid being seen.

Thus screened from observation, she sat waiting for it to pass, and her heart gave a great thump when she heard it stop directly before the house, while Mrs. Schuyler uttered an exclamation of delight at the roses growing so profusely in the yard.

"Oh, Janette, how lovely ~~those~~ roses are! I must have

some for my hair,—they will brighten me up at dinner, and I am looking pale and forlorn, and that vexes Colonel Schuyler so. I wonder if there is any one at home."

"There must be, for both doors and windows are open. Wait while I see."

And, suiting the action to the word, the maid, Janette, sprang to the ground, and, opening the gate, walked up to the door of the room where Heloise was sitting.

There was no help for her now. The danger, if danger there was in seeing Mrs. Schuyler, must be met, and Heloise rose at once, and to Janette's explanation that "Lady Emily would like a few of those lovely roses," she bowed assent, and went herself to get them.

"It may as well come first as last," she thought, and, without any covering for her head, she went out into the yard, and, gathering a bunch of the finest flowers, carried them to Mrs. Schuyler, who looked curiously at her, while she expressed her thanks.

Very curiously, too, Heloise looked at her, thinking it would take more than roses to brighten up that sallow, sickly face, and not much wondering that Colonel Schuyler did not like it.

"I don't believe she remembered me," she said, as she returned to the house and watched the carriage disappearing from view. "And why should she?" she continued. "She was not at all interested in the matter, and only thought of me as some common girl doing a very foolish thing, I daresay. She looks paler than she did then, and more fretful, too. I wonder if she is happy with all her money?"

And Heloise fell to speculating as to whether she could be happy if she were Mrs. Schuyler and lived in that handsome house on Schuyler Hill. It would be a fine thing, no doubt, to have all the money one wanted, and not to be obliged to turn and fix and mend the Sunday dress until there was but little of the original left; and she tried to fancy herself the mistress of Schuyler Hill, with Colonel Schuyler away and some one else in his place, and her eyes went over the tree-tops to the tall tower and the figure working there.

"Better as it is," she thought, and leaning back in her chair she went off into a pleasant kind of reverie, from which she was roused by the sound of horse's feet, galloping swiftly down the road as if on an errand of life or death.

The rider was one of the men from Schuyler Hill, and swiftly as he rode Heloise detected a look of terror on his face and wondered what had happened.

Involuntarily she glanced again toward the tower, and missed the form she had seen there a short time before. But there was nothing strange in that. She often missed him when he went down for nails or orders from his overseer, and she thought no more of it until an hour later, when her mother came up the walk, looking very red and disturbed, and asking, abruptly :

"Have you heard of the dreadful accident at the Hill?"

Heloise never could explain why it was that she seemed intuitively to know that the accident had reference to the only one through whom she could be deeply touched. But she did know it, and her lips were pale as ashes, and trembled in a grieved kind of way as she said : "It is Abelard."

"Yes ; who told you ?" her mother asked.

And Heloise replied :

"No one told me. I knew without telling. Is he much hurt ? Where is he ?"

And she caught her bonnet from the nail and started for the door.

"Stop, child. Where are you going?" Mrs. Fordham said.

And Heloise replied :

"Going to Abelard. Didn't you tell me he was hurt ?"

"Yes ; but,—Heloise"—and Mrs. Fordham hesitated a little, frightened by the expression on her daughter's face, "you must not go. There is no need ; he will be here soon. I told them to bring him, as we are the only friends he has, and I hurried home to get the front room ready. Abelard is dead ; he fell from the tower and was killed ; there they are now."

And pointing to the group of men coming slowly down the

road, Mrs. Fordham hastened to open her best room, and did not see the look of unutterable anguish and horror which came into her daughter's face when she heard the news.

Heloise did not faint, but she uttered a low, gasping cry, and held fast to the back of a chair, while everything turned dark about her, and she was conscious of nothing except that in the yard there was the tramp of feet as the men came up the walk, bearing the body of him who had left her only the night before, full of life and health. Then she started, and fleeing up the stairs to her own room, threw herself upon the bed, where she lay listening to the sounds below, and trying to realize the full extent of the horror which had come upon her. At last when all was quiet, and the men were gone, she crept to the window and looked out upon the day, which had seemed so bright to her in the early morning, but was so dark and dreary now.

Colonel Schuyler himself was just going through the gate, so occupied with his own thoughts that he nearly stumbled over a little girl who was coming into the yard, and in whom Heloise recognized Phebe Young, the daughter of the woman with whom Abelard had boarded. Heloise was not afraid of Phebe, but she drew back from the window till Colonel Schuyler was out of sight, feeling as if she almost hated him for having built the house where Abelard lost his life.

There was a knock at the door, and ere Heloise could answer it little Phebe Young came in. She had caught a glimpse of Heloise at the window, and thinking it no harm, had come straight up to her room.

"Please, miss," she said, laying a paper on the young girl's lap, "we found this under his jacket pinned tight, and ma knew most it comed from your rose bush, for there haint no more like it in Hampstead, and she sent it to you, cause she guesses you liked him some."

It was the rose Heloise had picked for Abelard and fastened in his buttonhole the night before, when they stood for a moment by the gate, and he told her to watch for him on the morrow as he was to work upon the tower. Now he was dead, and the rose, which had been so fresh and dewy then, was wilted and

crushed, and right in the centre, upon the pure white petals, was a little drop of blood, or rather the stain of one. Abelard's blood, Heloise knew, and she felt a strange sickness steal over her as she held the faded flower in her hand and gazed upon that bright red spot, the sight of which seemed to stamp a similar mark upon her heart, which ached and throbbed with a new pain.

"Yes, Phebe, thank you; it was kind in your mother; and now, please go; my head is aching badly," she said; and motioning Phebe from the room, she thrust the blood-stained rose into her bosom and went again to her bed, where she lay until her mother came to see what she was doing.

There were no tears on Heloise's cheeks, no trace of them in her eyes, but her white face told volumes to Mrs. Fordham, who laid her hand on her daughter's hair, saying, kindly:

"I never knew you cared so much for him. Poor boy, I am so sorry. He looks very natural. Would you like to see him?"

"No, mother, not now," was the answer, and that was all that passed between them on the subject of Abelard that day.

Heloise was very sick with headache and kept her room, and at night her mother brought her toast and tea, and tried to make her eat, and told her how kind the Schuylers were, and what a sweet little boy Godfrey was, and how badly he felt at Abelard's death. He had been to see the body, and his mother had been there, too, and Mrs. Fordham dwelt upon her fine manners and handsome dress, and Godfrey's velvet suit and manly face, until Heloise felt as if she should go mad, and begged her mother to leave her.

She hated the Schuylers one and all, for through them Abelard had met his death, and she did not dare look into the future or question what it had in store for her. She only felt that all the brightness of her life had been suddenly stricken out, leaving her utterly hopeless and desolate, and long after her mother was asleep in the next room she lay awake wondering what she should do, and if, as she feared, it would be necessary for her to tell. And even if it were not necessary, was it right for her to withhold the secret which was torturing her so

cruelly? Was it just to Abelard, and did it not look as if she were ashamed of the past as connected with him?

"I am not, darling, I am not!" she moaned; "and to-morrow, when they lower you into the grave, I will be there, and, in a voice everybody can hear, I'll tell the truth, and face the entire world, mother and all."

The facing mother was the hardest part of all, and Heloise felt her pulse quicken and her head throb violently as she fancied her mother's look of surprise and anger when she heard the story which she meant to tell at the grave, and, while thinking how she should combat that anger and reproach, the early summer morning crept into her room, and she heard the watchers with the dead go through the yard into the street, and knew that another day had come.

CHAPTER III.

THE DAY OF THE FUNERAL.

THERE was a great crowd out to attend the funeral of Abelard Lyle, and, long before the hour appointed for the services, Mrs. Fordham's cottage was filled to overflowing, as were also the yard and street in front, and it was with some difficulty the Schuyler family could make their way through the dense mass of people.

They came late, and little Godfrey had a knot of crape upon his arm, while Mrs. Schuyler wore a black silk, with no shade of color to relieve her sallow face, and she looked, with her high-bred city air, very much out of place, and very much bored, too, as if she wished it well over, and wondered why her husband should take so much trouble for a poor young man, and an entire stranger. And yet Lady Emily was not without kindly feelings, and she felt very grateful to Abelard Lyle, and very sorry that he should have lost his life in saving that of her son; and, at her husband's suggestion, she had been to the cottage the day before to see that everything was right, and

had spoken civilly to Mrs. Fordham, and asked for some more roses, saying :

"I have had some once to-day. I was driving by just before the terrible accident, and saw such a lovely young girl,—your daughter, I suppose ?"

"Yes, my daughter," Mrs. Fordham replied, a new hope rising within her that through the Schuylers Heloise might make her way to distinction.

Heloise had a headache, she said, else she would like so much for Mrs. Schuyler to see her, and she thanked her for speaking so kindly of her, and hoped she would call again when the funeral was over.

To all this Lady Emily pretended to listen and nod assent, and, when she had all the roses she cared for, she said good-morning, and went back to the hotel, where she recounted the particulars of her call to the English maid, with whom she was on very familiar terms.

"Such assurance," she said, "as that woman has ! Why, she talked to me as if I were her equal, and even asked me to call again. She wanted me to see her daughter,—that beautiful young girl whom we saw in our drive this morning. Did I tell you that is where they have taken the young man ? I should not be surprised if he were the lover of the girl, only she looked so very young. It seems to me I must have seen her before."

The appearance of Colonel Schuyler brought to an end the lady's conversation with Janette, and turning to her husband, she asked where they were intending to bury the young man.

"In our own family lot," was the reply ; and then Lady Emily dropped the flowers she was arranging, and her eyes opened wider than their wont, and fixed themselves upon her husband with a look of incredulity as she said : "Why, Howard, you must be crazy ! Surely there are places enough without putting him there."

"Yes, I know ; but, Emily, consider for a moment,—he saved our boy's life, and I feel like paying him every possible respect, and have ordered his grave to be made just under the

pine tree at the far side of the lot. There is room enough between for all the Schuylers who will ever be buried there."

Lady Emily knew from experience that when her husband's mind was made up, it was useless to argue with him, so she said no more, but thought within herself that when her time came to die, she would request that her aristocratic flesh be laid in Greenwood beside the Rossiters, and not on Schuyler Hill, in that little yard where a few gray, time-worn stones marked the last resting-place of such of the Schuylers as were buried there, and where Abelard Lyle was to be taken. Colonel Schuyler was in one sense as proud as his wife, but with his pride he had much good sense and genuine kindness of heart. But for Abelard Lyle he would have lost his bright-faced boy, and he felt truly grateful to the young man, and resolved to show him every possible respect. So he ordered the funeral himself, and sent to the cottage a handsome rosewood coffin, and was in and out several times to see that all was right, and when the hour for the services arrived, drove down with his wife and son, and enacted the part of chief, and, indeed, only mourner, for Abelard had no relatives, and Mrs. Fordham was too much afraid of being identified with "that class of people" to admit of any great manifestation of feeling on her part. For the sake of the mother country, and because he had been kind to her on the ship, she had allowed the body to be brought to her house, but she managed to impress every one with the great distance there was between herself and the dead man, who looked so calm and peaceful, and handsome in his elegant coffin, with a half-opened rose upon his breast. Mrs. Fordham had put it there at Heloise's request; but Heloise herself had taken no part in anything, or even seen the body. She had abandoned the idea of going to the grave and startling the people with her story, as she had meant to do the previous day. The pain in her head was too great to admit of her sitting up, and during the entire day she never once appeared below, but lay on the bed in her chamber, with her aching head buried in the pillow, and the faded, blood-stained rose hidden away in her bosom. She heard the people as they assembled in the

house and yard below, and knew when the Schuylers came by the suppressed hush among the crowd. She heard, too, the clergyman's voice as he read the burial service, and when they carried the body out she arose from her bed and through the half-closed shutters watched the funeral procession as it moved up the road, to the top of Schuyler Hill, where the open grave was waiting for all that was mortal of Abelard Lyle. Heloise could not pray then, her heart was so hard and rebellious, and ached so with a sense of actual pain, and loss, and a horrid fear of what might be in the future; and once when this fear got the mastery of her she arose, and going to her private drawer, where she kept her hidden treasures, took from it a box, in which she sought for and found, as she supposed, the instrument which was to help her in the hour of need, when she told the world what she must ere long tell. With trembling fingers she unfolded the paper and felt herself grow cold and faint, when she saw that instead of the article which was to prove her innocent and pure, she held only a receipt for goods bought and paid for by her mother in New York. Search as she might, she could not find the document she sought. That was gone, how or where she could not guess until she remembered having burned some waste papers accumulating in her drawer, only a few days before. She had it then and read it over, and supposed she laid it back in the box where she always kept it, but she must have put in its place the receipt which was folded and looked much like it, and burned the only evidence she had that she was not the wicked thing she felt herself to be as she sank upon the floor and wished that she could die. It was terrible to see such grief in one so young, for Heloise, though well grown and tall, was little more than fifteen, and her face when in repose was the face of a child. But it seemed old now, and gray, and pinched with that look of anguish upon it, mingled with something akin to shame, as she crouched upon the floor and whispered to herself:

"What if mother and the world do not believe me?" Then swift as thought the answer came: "I'll drown myself in the river;" and sitting upright upon the floor, the young girl went

through in fancy with all the sickening details which such a catastrophe would involve. The anxiety of the mother, the alarm, the search for her body, the finding it at last, and the coroner's inquest, where possibly her secret would be discovered and she be disgraced all the same.

"No, no," she moaned, "better live and fight it out, knowing I am innocent, than carry a sullied name to a suicide's grave."

"And lose your soul," something whispered in her ear, making her start with a new horror as she remembered the hereafter she had in her madness almost forgotten.

Falling upon her knees, she sobbed, "Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil."

That was all she could say, but Jesus knew what she meant, —knew that she wanted help, and He helped her as He always does when asked aright, and her heart ceased to throb so painfully, and the hard look left her face, and the tears came to her relief as she said :

"I know I am innocent, and so does God ; and I'll tell mother the truth, keeping nothing back."

Heloise had risen now, and with trembling hands was binding up her beautiful hair of golden brown, which Abelard had admired so much, and which she, too, knew was wonderful for its brightness and luxuriance. Would she ever care for it again ? she asked herself, as she put it away under a net where not even a single curl could find its way to neck or brow, when suddenly, as if it had been a vision, she saw an elegant room which seemed to be at Schuyler Hill, and in that room a lady of marvellous beauty, with a face like her own, save that it was older and more mature,—a lady, clad in satin and lace, with jewels in her flowing hair and on her snowy neck, and to herself she said :

"That's I. How came I there ?"

Then the mist, if mist it was, which had for a moment clouded her mind, lifted, and she was herself again,—Heloise Fordham, standing in her own humble room and making herself ready for the meeting with her mother, and the confession she meant to make before she slept again.

I was at the funeral and saw Abelard in his coffin, and thought how dreadful it was to die so far from home and have no tears shed for me, for there were none shed for him. Everybody looked sorry, and sober, and shocked, Colonel Schuyler particularly so, and Lady Emily put her fine cambric handkerchief to her eyes when the rector spoke of the noble deed which never could be forgotten by those for whom it was done ; but she did not cry, I know, for I was watching her, and I wanted to shake little Godfrey, who, though he was very subdued and quiet, actually nodded in his high chair before the remarks were over.

It was a sad funeral and a big funeral, but one void of genuine heartache, save as one young heart up-stairs was breaking, and of this I did not then know.

Although more than two years the junior of Heloise, I perhaps knew her better than any one else. Intimate friends she had not, but between her and myself an acquaintance had sprung up, born of our common love for flowers and rambles by the river side. We had exchanged slips of roses and geraniums, and talked over the gate of our flower-beds, and once, when caught in a rain-storm, she had taken tea with us and delighted us all with her pretty, ladylike manners and soft, gentle speech. I was charmed with her, and having, as I believed, a secret of hers in my possession, I felt greatly interested in her, and when at the funeral I missed her and heard of the sick headache which was keeping her up-stairs, I had my own private opinion with regard to the cause of that headache, and with all the curiosity of a girl of thirteen, determined upon seeing her and judging for myself how a girl looked who had lost her lover. Accordingly I lingered after the funeral, and when the people were gone and I had taken several turns in the garden I ventured up the stairs to her room and knocked softly at her door.

"Come in," was spoken in a frightened tone, and I went in and found her standing in the middle of the room, her hands pressed to her head and her eyes fixed upon the door with an expression of alarm.

At sight of me, however, they changed at once, and with a smile she said :

"Oh, it's you. I thought it was mother."

"No, she hasn't had time to come back yet," I replied ; and then, touched by the look of her white face, I burst out : "Oh, Heloise, isn't it terrible, and he so young and handsome ? I am so sorry for you."

"Hush-sh," she said, in a tone of alarm. "Why are you sorry for me ? Why should any one be more sorry for me than for another ?"

She was gazing fixedly at me, and, impelled by something I could not or did not try to resist, I replied :

"Because,—because I guess he was your beau."

Heloise's eyes were almost black now in her excitement, and her voice was husky as she said :

"You guess he was my beau ! Why do you guess so ? What business have you to guess so ? Tell me, child."

She seemed many years my senior then, and in obedience to her question I answered :

"I've seen him look at you just as brother Tom looks at Samantha Blackmer, and he's her beau ; and then I saw him kiss you once down by the river, that time I came upon you suddenly, you remember ; but I never told. He was your beau, wasn't he ?"

She did not answer for a moment, but her lips moved as if she were trying to speak, and at last she said :

"No, he was not my beau, Ettie (that was my pet name twenty years ago, before I was the village schoolmistress)—Ettie, I believe you like me, and I want—I want—you—to,—oh, Ettie, if ever people say bad things of me don't you believe them, but stand by me, won't you ?"

She had both my hands in hers, and was looking straight into my eyes with an expression which half-frightened me out of my wits, as I told her I would stand by her, without, however, knowing at all what she meant. I was a little proud to be thus appealed to, and when the fixed expression of her face gave way and the tears began to roll down her cheeks, I cried

too from sympathy and tried to comfort her and made her lie down upon her bed, and when she was more quiet sat by her until I heard her mother's step below. Then I took my leave for I was afraid of Mrs. Fordham, whom I met on the stairs, and whose face I fancied looked brighter and more cheerful than faces usually do when returning from a grave.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONFESSION.

HELOISE," Mrs. Fordham exclaimed, as she entered her daughter's room. "What is the matter? You look as if you had been sick for years. Can it be you loved him so much?"

"Yes, mother; more than you can guess. I'll tell you about it by and by; to-night, maybe, when I feel stronger. I can't talk now."

"Would you like me to tell you how well everything passed off at the grave, and how thoughtful Col. Schuyler was?" Mrs. Fordham continued, and Heloise replied:

"No, mother, not a word, now nor ever. I can't bear it. I almost hate the Schuylers, and I wish I, too, was dead."

It was not often that Heloise was thus moved, and her mother looked at her curiously, but she said no more of the Schuylers or Abelard, and busied herself with putting the cottage to rights and preparing a tempting little supper for her daughter. But Heloise could not eat, and after the supper was cleared away and her mother had taken her usual seat upon the back porch, she crept to her side, and putting her head in her lap, said entreatingly:

"Mother, I have something to tell you which will surprise and probably offend you. I ought to have told it before, but I was afraid and kept putting it off. It was wrong, I know, but it cannot now be helped. Abelard and I were married!"

"You married to Abelard Lyle!" Mrs. Fordham exclaimed, starting back as if a serpent had stung her.

She did not say, "I am glad then that he is dead," but she thought it, and the thought must have communicated itself to Heloise, for she lifted up her head and looked reproachfully in her mother's face, while her lip quivered in a grieved kind of way, but she did not cry, and her voice was steady as she said:

"Oh, mother, don't speak so to me, as if marrying him was the most disgraceful thing I could do. I loved him so much, and he loved me. It was during the long voyage when I saw so much of him. You know you were sick most of the time, and that left me to him, and he was so kind, and before we reached New York I promised to be his wife some time, and meant to tell you."

"Why didn't you, then?"

The tone was harsh and unrelenting in which Mrs. Fordham put this question, and Heloise flushed a little and answered, hurriedly:

"It was wrong, I know, but you are, you were,—forgive me, mother,—you are prouder, more ambitious than I am. You think I might marry a nobleman, and I shrank from telling you for fear you would separate us and that time you went to Hoboken and stayed a week with your friend, Abelard persuaded me to be married. We could keep it a secret, he said, until he had something beforehand and was in a better position."

"Umph! As if he could rise to a better position. Child, with your face and manner you might be the first lady in the land, instead of throwing yourself away on a poor carpenter."

Mrs. Fordham spoke very bitterly, and her eyes had in them a hard, angry look, which roused all the temper there was in the young girl, who answered, hotly:

"Abelard's profession was an honorable one. Joseph was a carpenter. Abelard was not to blame for being poor; one of his sisters married into as good a family as there is in Scotland, and had he lived he would have risen above poverty and obscurity. America has many avenues for such as he, and I

should one day have been so proud of him. Oh, my darling, my husband!"

The temper was all gone now, and the girl's voice was like a wailing sob as she uttered the name, "My husband," but it did not touch the mother's heart or make her one whit sorry for her child.

"Where was it? I mean who married you?" she asked; and Heloise replied:

"A Mr. Calvert, in New York."

"A dissenter?" was the next question; and Heloise answered:

"Yes, I believe so; Abelard did not care who it was, so we were married, and he looked in the Directory and found the name of the Rev. Charles Calvert, and persuaded me to go there. I think he was not preaching anywhere, but he could marry us the same, and he did."

"Without any reference or asking you any questions?" Mrs. Fordham said, and Heloise hesitated a little.

She did not like to tell that Abelard had represented her as alone in this country, and had given that as a reason for marrying so young; so she evaded the question, and answered:

"The minister was satisfied, only he said I seemed like a child; and one of the ladies present said so, too, and asked how old I was. Abelard told her, 'older than I looked,' and that was all they said."

Heloise paused a moment, and then went on:

"I have heard since that Mr. Calvert was a half brother of Mrs. Schuyler, who was in the room when we were married, and had little Godfrey with her."

"Mrs. Schuyler saw you married!" Mrs. Fordham exclaimed. "The matter grows worse and worse. Now that Abelard is dead, I hoped it might not be known. You have seen her since,—do you think she recognized you?"

"I know she did not. She could not have seen me distinctly that night in New York. She was sick, I think; at all events, she lay upon a couch, and did not get up at all. I know it was Mrs. Schuyler, because the other lady, Mrs. Cal-

vert, called her Emily, and the little boy told Abelard his name was Godfrey Schuyler."

"Have you a certificate of the marriage?" was Mrs. Fordham's next question, and her daughter replied:

"I did have, and kept it in a box Abelard gave me, but I've lost it. I had it out the other day with some other papers, and thought I put it back, but must have burned it and substituted for it a receipt which looked like it. Oh, mother! will people think I never was married at all, when they know it?"

The girl was crouching at her mother's feet in such an agony of shame and fear that at first she hardly heard what her mother was saying about there being no need for people to know of the marriage.

"Godfrey is too young to remember it, or he would have recognized Abelard," Mrs. Fordham said; "and it is not likely the two ladies thought enough of you to keep you in mind a week. There is nothing but Abelard's peculiar name to make any impression. They might remember that."

"No, mother." And Heloise lifted her head quickly. "His first name was James, and as he liked that the best, he called himself 'James A. Lyle,' and it was so written in the certificate."

"Then it never need be known that you made this low marriage!" Mrs. Fordham exclaimed, in a tone of intense relief.

"Mother!"—and starting up, from her crouching posture, Heloise's eyes flashed indignantly as she said,—“do you think I am ashamed of my love for Abelard, or that I will consent to act a lie all my life, even if I could do so without detection, which I cannot, for, mother, I have not told you all; the dreadful part is to come. I—I—oh! I can't speak it. You *must* know what I mean."

Heloise was at her mother's feet again, her hands clasped together nervously, and her breath coming in quick, panting gasps, as she whispered the dreadful thing she had to tell, and then fell forward on her face, fainting entirely away.

For an instant Mrs. Fordham sat like one stunned by a heavy blow, powerless to move or speak; but her ever-active, far-see-

ing mind was busy, and before she stooped to raise her unconscious daughter, she had come to a decision.

All her hopes for the future should not be thus blasted. Her daughter should yet ride in the high places of the land, and should never be known to the world as the widow of a carpenter. She repeated the last words sneeringly, and then lifting up her child bore her to the window, where the cool evening air could blow upon her. It was not long ere Heloise came back to consciousness, but her face still wore the same white, frightened look it had put on when she whispered her secret. Ere long, however, the pallid hue changed to a scarlet flush as she listened to her mother's plan, and her fixed purpose to carry it out. They were to leave Hampstead at once and go back to England, where in London they would for a time live in obscurity, unknown to any one save those with whom they were compelled to come in contact.

"Nobody here will believe in your marriage," she said, as she saw Heloise about to speak, and guessed that it was to oppose her. "Your certificate is lost."

"Yes, but Mr. Calvert must have a record; he would remember," Heloise said, faintly; and her mother replied: "Possibly; but I do not care to have him remember. I do not wish your marriage known, and it shall not be. Hear me, Heloise, it shall not be, I say."

"But I cannot live a lie," the poor girl moaned, as she rocked to and fro, with her head bent down, and her whole attitude one of great mental distress.

"You forget that you have been living a lie these three months past. It is rather late now to make it a matter of conscience, and I shall not listen to such foolishness. So far as this you may be truthful. In England you may take his name. Lyle is better than Fordham, and for a time you must of course pass for a married woman; after that,—I have not decided."

There was a hard, implacable expression in Mrs. Fordham's face as she said this, and she looked at that moment as if capable of almost anything which would promote her own ends. Though kind and affectionate in the main she had always kept

her daughter in a state of rigid obedience, if not subjection to her will, and she had no idea of being thwarted now. Heloise, who understood her so well and knew how useless it was to contend with so strong and fierce a spirit, felt herself powerless to oppose anything, and thus gave a tacit consent at least to her mother's plans. For two or three days, however, she kept her room, and did not go down when Mrs. Schuyler came with little Godfrey, and asked for more of the "lovely roses."

There was nothing said of Abelard. Lady Emily had forgotten him, and had no thought or care for the young girl watching her from the window as she flitted about the rose-bush, in her dainty white morning dress, with its lace and fluted ruffles. She was not pretty at all, but her movements were very graceful, and she made a pleasant picture in the little yard, and Heloise half envied her as she thought how blessed she was in home, and husband, and children she was not ashamed to own. She was waiting now, it seemed, for the colonel, who was to take her for a drive, and who soon came down the road, and stopping before the gate asked Mrs. Fordham to come to him for a moment.

He intended raising a monument to the memory of Abelard Lyle, he said, and he would like to inquire his age, place of birth, and if he had another name than Abelard. Mrs. Fordham was sorry she could not give the desired information. Indeed, people were laboring under a misapprehension with regard to herself and the young man. He was a mere ship acquaintance, but she believed he had a mother and possibly a sister. She had never liked this country much, and was intending to return to England very soon, where she would find his friends or communicate with them in some way. Colonel Schuyler was very kind to be so much interested in the young man. She had liked him, too, so far as she knew him, but she had only done for him what she would do for any of her countrymen under similar circumstances.

Mrs. Fordham spoke loftily and decidedly, and Colonel Schuyler looked at her a little curiously as he said:

"Ah, indeed! I am sorry you don't know his age, though

it does not matter much. I wish you good-morning, madam."

He lifted his hat and was turning away, when from the upper window there came a clear, ringing voice, which said :

"Colonel Schuyler, I can tell you what you wish to know. He was born in Alnwick, England ; he was twenty-three last March, and his first name was James."

"Thanks," and Colonel Schuyler started in surprise, both at the voice and the beautiful young face, which looked so eagerly at him for an instant and then was withdrawn from sight.

"That was a most remarkable face, Emily. Do you know who the young girl is?" Colonel Schuyler asked, as he drove off with his wife.

Mrs. Schuyler believed it was the daughter of that woman, and she guessed she was rather pretty, though she did not notice her particularly.

"That class of people do sometimes produce very fine complexions and tolerably good features."

That was the lady's reply, and then she talked of something else, and forgot Heloise entirely. But that night, strangely enough, the colonel dreamed of that window in the cottage round which a honeysuckle was trained, and of a pale, sweet face framed in the net-work of green, and the clear, hazel eyes, which for a moment had looked at him. And, when he woke, he was conscious of a feeling of interest in the young girl, and resolved to make some inquiries concerning her. But the next day he went down to New York to order the monument for Abelard's grave ; and when, after an absence of two weeks, he returned to Hampstead, the cottage was shut up, and he learned that Mrs. Fordham had gone to England and taken her daughter with her.

Remembering what Mrs. Fordham had said to him when he went to make some inquiries concerning Abelard Lyle, he was not as much surprised as the villagers had been when they heard of Mrs. Fordham's intention to give up her pretty cottage and return to her friends. She laid great stress upon her friends, and hinted broadly that the people of Hampstead were not to

her taste. Nobody cared especially, though many wondered at her fickleness in changing her residence so soon. I was sorry, for I liked Heloise and hated to part with her. Remembering what she had said to me of the dreadful thing which might happen to her, and to which my championship was pledged, I felt disappointed not to have a chance of proving myself her friend, and I told her so when I went to say good-by, and found her in the little room where I had seen her on the day of the funeral. Her eyes were almost black, and there was a peculiar expression in them as she regarded me fixedly for a moment without speaking.

"Ettie," she said at last, "I deceived you the other day. I told you Abelard was not my beau, and that—that was not quite the truth, for though he was not what you meant, he was—I liked him, oh so much, and he liked me, and—and—oh, Ettie, I am very, very miserable."

She was sobbing piteously, and I could only smooth her hair by way of comfort as I did not know what to say.

"Ettie," she began again, when she had dried her eyes, "they say Colonel Schuyler is fixing up the grave and will put a grand monument there. I am thankful to him for that, but after a time he will forget all about it, and grass and weeds will grow where only flowers should be. Ettie, you like me, I think, and will you, for my sake, keep his grave up nice and pretty, and put fresh flowers there in the summer-time? Put them in this vase; I give it to you for that; he bought it for me in New York."

She placed in my hand a small vase of creamy white, with a band of gold around it, and on its side a bunch of blue forget-me-nots, in the centre of which were two hearts transfixed with a golden arrow.

"It will make me happy to know this is on his grave when I am so far away," she added; "and, Ettie, don't tell any one, but last night, when everybody was asleep, I went there and planted a little rose-bush like that tree in the garden, you know. I am sure it will live, for it had a good root, and I want you to water it and nurse it to life, and when they put up the

stone don't let them trample it down. Will you do this for me?"

I promised that I would, and she went on:

"Some time when I am older and have money I shall come back to see his grave. You'll have it nice for me, won't you?"

I promised her again, and then, taking the scissors from the table, she cut from the back of her head one of her long, bright curls, and laying it in my hands bade me keep it as a remembrance of her.

"Mother is coming and you must go," she said, with a little shiver, as we heard Mrs. Fordham's voice below, and with a hurried kiss and the whispered words, "Remember about the grave, good-by, I shall see you again some time, and possibly write to you," she pushed me toward the door, and when I saw her again she was waving her hand to me from the window of the car which took her away from Hampstead.

CHAPTER V.

EDITH LYLE.

IT was a dark, dreary, January afternoon, and the dreariness and darkness were increased by the dense fog which since noon had settled like a pall over the great city of London, and by a pitiless rain, which, mixing with melting snow, ran in muddy puddles down the gutters and in dirty streams down the windows of the third floor back room of the lodging in Dorset Street, where a very young girl was lying. Her face was whiter than the pillow against which it lay, and in the eyes there was a look of utter helplessness, as if all life, and hope, and energy had been crushed out, and there was nothing left but apathy and utter indifference to the future. And yet this was the same face which Colonel Schuyler had seen framed in a net-work of green, and of whose bright beauty he had dreamed, with his lady wife beside him;

but he would not have known it now. Months of mental anguish and continual combat with the mother's stronger nature, added to days of intense suffering, and homesickness, and longing for the dead in that far-off grave in Hampstead, had left their marks on the young girl, until now that the crisis was past she lay quiet and passive in her mother's hands and seemed to assent to whatever the mother proposed.

That estimable woman had chosen lodgings in Dorset Street, knowing she would be safe there from any one whom her daughter might meet in the future. The name Heloise had been dropped, and she was Edith Lyle now, a young widow, whose husband had died soon after her marriage, and so no suspicions were excited and no comments made by the few who occasionally saw her stealing up or down the stairs which led to her apartment. Only the housemaid, Mary Stover, was interested in her, or paid much heed to her extreme youth and beauty. And even Mary but seldom came in contact with her, so that Edith hardly knew of her existence, or how much she was in the serving woman's thoughts. Since the birth of her baby, a wee little creature, with masses of golden hair and a look in its blue eyes of the dead, Edith had scarcely thought of anything, but had lain with the child held closely to her bosom, as if fearful of losing it. Baby was now four weeks old, and the impatient Mrs. Fordham could wait no longer, and on the dreary day of which I write she sat by her daughter's side and said to her, in the tone which Edith had never yet had courage to withstand :

"Edith, you are strong enough now to leave this wretched place. Baby will be four weeks old to-morrow, and I have everything arranged. I have made particular inquiries about the — Street Foundling Hospital, and learned that in no other place are the children so well cared for. The matron and nurses are very kind, and the little ones healthy and happy, and in nine cases out of ten are adopted by good families and grow up respectable men and women."

"But, mother," Edith gasped, while her hold tightened on the little pink fingers which lay on her neck, "I cannot let her

go. She is mine,—truly, lawfully mine,—and you shall not take her from me.”

“Hush, child, you do not know what you are talking about,” came impatiently from Mrs. Fordham’s lips. “I tell you we cannot be hampered with a child, and it shall be as I say. I know it will be well cared for. I shall keep sight of her, and see that no harm befalls her, and if you ever should wish to claim it, that mark on its bosom is sufficient to identify it.”

At the mention of the peculiar birth-mark on her child, Edith moaned faintly, and thought of the white rose with the blood stain in the centre, and the awful day when it was brought back to her, and she had laid it next her breaking heart. There was a blood-red spot over baby’s heart, and Edith knew how it came there, and shuddered and grew sick as she remembered it, and held tighter to the little one whom her mother would wrest from her. At last, wearied with the controversy which was exciting her daughter so much, Mrs. Fordham seemed to give up the contest, but it was only seeming. She was one who never gave up, and what she could not accomplish by fair means she was not too scrupulous to attain by foul. Baby must go. It was something in her way, and must be sacrificed; so, when the hour came round for her daughter’s medicine, she mixed with it one of the sedative powders which Edith had taken for wakefulness when her illness was at the worst. As it had been successful then so it was now, and she ere long fell into a heavy sleep, which Mrs. Fordham knew from experience would last for several hours. This was her time for action, and going to the bed she stooped to take the child from the arms which held it so fast. Even in her sleep Edith must have had a dim consciousness of the threatened danger, for she held firmly to the little one, while her white lips moaned :

“No, she is mine; you cannot have her.”

But for this Mrs. Fordham did not hesitate, and with a firm hand she carefully unclasped the clinging arms and lifted the child from the bed.

Had it been a gentleman’s offspring, and Edith the mistress

of some luxurious home, she might have felt some love and tenderness for the little creature, which, roused from its sleep, opened its blue eyes and looked into her face. But it was lowly born, a descendant of the Lyles, who lived in obscurity among the heather hills of Alnwick, and she steeled her heart against it, and never faltered in her purpose, even when the pretty lips parted and gave forth a sound, which made Edith start and half turn upon her pillow as if about to waken. But the sedative was good, and the young girl slept on, while her mother robed the little one in its best attire, and wrote upon a bit of paper which she pinned upon its bosom :

“ Her name is Heloise, and she is not a child of shame, but of an imprudent marriage, and inherits from her mother, who is a lady, some of the best blood in England.”

“ That will save her from a life of servitude ; the high bloods always take such children as these,” she said, “ and it will be much better so than a drag on us.”

Ten minutes later and she stole softly down the stairs, bearing under her cloak a bundle which, when she retraced her steps, was not with her. But it was safe from the chill air of the night, for she had rung the bell of — Street Hospital, and depositing her burden on the steps had retreated swiftly behind a clump of shrubbery until she saw the door opened and the child received into the warmth and light within. The rain had ceased and the fog had cleared away with the going down of the sun, but no one could have recognized her in the dim starlight, with the hood of her water-proof drawn closely over her head, and when she reached the house in Dorset Street she felt as if cut loose from everything which could in any way interfere with her ambitious projects.

Edith had slept soundly, and when at last her mother came and stood beside the bed she lay in the same deep slumber, with a bright flush on her cheeks and her arm still stretched over the spot where but an hour ago a little pink-and-white baby lay. It was gone now, but she did not know it, or dream of the anguish in store for her when she should rouse from the sleep which lasted until near midnight. Then with a sudden

start and sense of danger she woke, and sitting up in bed felt for her child under the sheet,—on the pillow,—under the pillow,—on the counterpane,—everywhere, but all in vain. Baby was gone, and in a voice husky with fright and terror she called to the figure sitting so motionless by the fire, “Mother, mother, where is baby? Is she in your lap, mother?” and, alarmed at Mrs. Fordham’s ominous silence, Edith sprang to her side, and with a sensation as if her heart was bursting from her throat, gasped out :

“Mother, tell me ;—what have you done with my child ?”

And Mrs. Fordham did tell her, while Edith listened like one paralyzed beyond the power to move. Speak she could not at first, for a horrible suffocating sensation in her throat ; but her face was deadly pale and her lips quivered, while the fury of a tigress when bereft of its young glared from her eyes. At last she found her voice, and the words rang through the room with terrible distinctness.

“Mother, may God’s curse fall on you, if a hair of baby’s head is harmed, and if, when I am strong and well, and able to cope with you, I fail to find my darling may He turn every happiness I ever hope to know into sorrow, and blight the dearest earthly wish I may ever have again.”

Then she fell fainting at the feet of her mother, who, if not moved by the denunciation against herself, was alarmed at the deathlike unconsciousness which lasted so long. But youth and health can endure much and live, and Edith came back to life and sense again, but lay utterly prostrate and helpless, with a choking lump in her throat which prevented her from speaking above the faintest whisper. To move her that day to other and better quarters was impossible, nor did Mrs. Fordham care particularly to do it. No one there would know of the child’s absence, for no one ever came into their room except Mary Stover, who was always quiet and respectful, and who on this day when she brought up warm water for the tea, never spoke or seemed to notice anything.

Next morning Edith was better, and when Mary came with the breakfast she was bidden to tell her mistress that Mrs

Fordham was going away at once, but would pay the month's rent just the same.

"Very well, ma'am. I'll tell her when she comes in. She's out marketin' now," was the girl's reply as she left the room; and when Mrs. Jones, the owner of the house, returned, her late lodgers were gone, and Mary handed her the rent for the whole month, as Mrs. Fordham had bidden her to do.

Mrs. Jones was surprised at the sudden departure of people of whom she had been a little proud, inasmuch as they were above the class which usually stopped with her, but the money for the whole month and the certainty that she knew of other lodgers to take the rooms, kept her quiet, and she merely said :

"They were in a mighty hurry to be off. Do you know, where they are gone?"

Mary did not. A handsome carriage had come for them, and madam almost carried the young lady to it, she said, adding :

"That was a very pretty lass, with the sweetest face I ever saw."

To this Mrs. Jones assented, and as just then there was a ring, and people were announced looking for rooms, her late tenants passed as completely from her mind as they passed from her surroundings to a new life in a pleasanter part of London.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BEGINNING OF A NEW LIFE.



HE shock of finding her baby gone, together with the removal from Dorset Street, in her weak state brought on another faint; and when the carriage stopped before the house in the vicinity of Belgrave Square, Edith lay unconscious in the arms of her mother, who carried her up the steps and into the large airy room, where for a time they were to stay until she had decided upon her future course, and her daughter's health was restored. In a few weeks at most they should move again, Mrs. Fordham thought, but in

this she was mistaken. Edith did not rally; the fainting fit was succeeded by a low nervous fever, which lasted for so long that the hedge roses were in blossom, and the breath of early summer was stealing in at her window when she was at last able to walk across the floor.

"Now, mother," she said one morning, when for the first time in months she was dressed and sitting up. "Now, you must go for baby; go to-day,—will you,—or shall I send some one else?"

She spoke decidedly, and Mrs. Fordham, who felt that there was a change in her daughter, and that henceforth their relations to each other must be different from what they had heretofore been, did not oppose her, but answered, readily:

"I will go myself;" and an hour later she stood again at the door of — Street Foundling Hospital. She was a clergyman's widow, she said, and had come to make inquiries concerning a child named Heloise, which was left there some time in January. Could they tell her anything about it?

They could tell her, and they did, and with a throbbing of the heart and a relieved expression on her face, she started home, where Edith was waiting for her.

"Where is it, mother?" was the question asked eagerly.

"Edith, baby is dead. It only lived three weeks, they told me. It was born, it seems, with some affection of the heart, which, under any circumstances, would have ended its life in a short time, the physician said. It had every possible care, and died with little or no pain. I was particular to inquire about that, as I knew you would wish to know. There, there, my child, don't take it so hard," and Mrs. Fordham laid her hand on the bowed head of the sorrowing girl, who was weeping passionately. "It was wrong perhaps to take it from you, and I am sorry now I did it. I thought then it was for the best, for a baby would be in our way. Forgive me, Edith, and let us bury the past forever."

She stooped to kiss her daughter, in whose mind there was no shadow of doubt that what her mother had told her was true. Her baby was dead, and though she mourned for it truly she

knew that it was far better off in heaven than in that hospital, with only strangers to care for it; and gradually, as the days went by and she felt her strength and health coming back again, the sense of loss and pain which at first had weighed so heavily upon her, began to give way, and more than one of the lodgers in the house noticed and commented upon the great beauty of the young girl, whom they sometimes met upon the stairs or saw sitting by her window. They knew the grave woman dressed in widow's weeds was Mrs. Fordham, and as the young girl was her daughter they naturally supposed her to be Miss Fordham, a mistake which the mother took no pains to rectify; while Edith, who had suffered so much, began to feel an utter inability to oppose her own will to that of her mother, and when the latter said to her, "It is not necessary for you to explain to others that your name is not Fordham," she passively acquiesced: and thus none of the lodgers ever heard the name of Lyle, or dreamed of that grave across the sea at Schuyler Hill, or the dreary room in Dorset Street, and the scenes enacted there. All these were buried in the past, and there was nothing in the way of Mrs. Fordham's plans, except, indeed, the means to carry them out.

Once the mother had hoped much from her daughter's voice, which was a fine contralto of great power and compass; but that hope was gone, for on the dreadful day when, with the fury of a tigress, Edith had invoked Heaven's curse upon her mother if so much as a hair of baby's head was harmed, it seemed as if a hand of iron had clutched her throat with a remorseless grasp, which had for a time deprived her of her powers of utterance, except in a hoarse whisper. At intervals, even now, she felt the grip of those fingers, and would start suddenly with a sense of suffocation, which soon passed away, and left her breathing free as ever. But the glorious voice did not come back, and though she sometimes sang some sweet, low song, her voice was very weak, and a musical education, so far as singing was concerned, was of course out of the question; but for all other branches the best of teachers were procured, and Edith, who possessed a fondness for books, pro-

gressed so rapidly as to astonish even herself, while her mother would have been perfectly content but for one little annoyance which haunted her continually, and which increased with every succeeding day. Her finances were fearfully low; nor did she know where aid was to come from.

Since leaving Dorset Street she had assumed a mode of life far above her means, and she was seriously considering the propriety of taking lodgers herself instead of being lodged, when fortune sent in her way a kind, simple-hearted old man, with less of brains than money, as was proved by his offering himself to Mrs. Fordham, whose comely face and dignified bearing attracted his fancy, and who accepted him at once and became Mrs. Dr. Barrett, with a pleasant home in a quiet part of London, and money enough to supply every comfort of life, as well as some of its luxuries.

Though twice married Dr. Barrett had never had a child, and his kind, fatherly heart went out at once to Edith, whom he loved and treated as a daughter, and who spent under his roof the happiest, most peaceful years of her life.

As it is not my intention to narrate in detail the incidents of those years, during which Edith was first a pupil, then a governess, and then an organist at St. John's, I shall pass over them silently, and take my readers with me to a time when in her full maturity of beauty and grace, such as few women have ever possessed, she stood just on the verge of the brilliant life her mother had so desired for her, and which proved to be so different from anything of which the wily, scheming woman had dreamed.

CHAPTER VII.

ELEVEN YEARS LATER.

DR. BARRETT was dead; and as with his life the income ceased which had made Mrs. Fordham so comfortable, she was again reduced to the necessity of earning her daily bread, which she did by doing plain sewing, and letting

two or three rooms of the little cottage, which was all her husband had left her.

Edith was not with her. For two years or more she had been the companion of a Mrs. Sinclair, a wealthy invalid, who had advertised for some young person who was a good reader and did not object to sick people. The salary offered was not large, but as there was a prospect of permanency, Edith had answered the advertisement in person and been preferred to scores of others, who sought for the place. For six months and more Mrs. Sinclair had been abroad, but she was now in her pleasant home, a few miles from London, and on the summer morning of which I write she lay on the couch in her sitting-room, which opened upon the terrace, where, on a rustic bench beneath the shadow of a maple tree, a young girl was sitting, her white hands holding idly the book she was not reading, and her eyes looking far away, as if in quest of something never found. That was Edith, whom one would hardly recognize, so entirely changed was she in style, and manner, and general appearance. The bright color which had once been so noticeable was gone, and her complexion was clear and white, and smooth as marble, save when some sudden emotion called a faint color to her cheek. The eyes, too, were darker now, and when kindling with excitement, seemed almost black with the long curling lashes which shaded them. There was also a darker shade on the beautiful golden brown hair, which was coiled in heavy braids around her well-shaped head, and added to her apparent height. Perfect in form and face, graceful in manner, always self-possessed and ready, with the right word in the right place, Edith Lyle was a favorite wherever she went, and, during the two years she had been with Mrs. Sinclair, that lady had learned to love her as a sister, and treated her with all the consideration of a friend and equal. And Edith was very happy, save when a thought of the past came over her, and then there would steal into her eyes a look of pain, and the muscles about her mouth would contract, as if she were forcing back words she longed to utter, but dared not.

Her marriage was still a secret to every one save her mother

Even Dr. Barrett had known nothing of it until just before he died, when she told him her story, and begged him not to hate her, because it was not earlier told.

The doctor was surprised, but not angry, and, laying his hand fondly on the young girl's head, he said :

"Poor child, you have suffered a great deal, and I pity you so much ; but I am not angry,—no, no. I reckon your mother is right. She generally is. She's a most wonderful woman for business. You'll get on better as a girl than you would as a widow,—that is, you'll be saved a great deal of idle, curious questioning, and make a better match by and by. With that face and that manner of yours, you ought to marry a title , as Widow Lyle you could not. Had the child lived it would be different ; now it is dead, you had better let matters remain as they are. It will please your mother so, and be quite as well for you."

This was the doctor's advice, which lifted a heavy load from Edith's mind. Perhaps it was better to keep silent with regard to her marriage, she thought, especially as no one could be harmed by it ; and gradually, as time passed on, she came to think of the past as a horrible dream, from which she had awakened to find the horror gone and the sunlight of content, if not of happiness, still shining around her. She, however, preferred her real name, and when she went to Mrs. Sinclair it was as Edith Lyle, and when that lady on hearing her mother mentioned as Mrs. Barrett asked how that was, Edith replied :

"Mother has been married twice. Dr. Barrett was my step-father."

Thus Mrs. Sinclair had no suspicion of the truth, and soon learned to regard Miss Lyle as more than a mere hired companion, and was never long easy when away from her. On the day of which I write, they had returned the previous night after an absence of several months, and, attracted by the freshness of the morning and the beauty of the grounds, Edith had left Mrs. Sinclair to read the pile of letters she found awaiting her, and stolen out to her favorite seat beneath the maples, where, through an opening in the distant trees of the park, she could

catch glimpses of the Thames and the great city with its forest of spires and domes. And as she sat there in her tasteful cambric wrapper, with only a bit of blue ribbon at her throat and in her hair, no one who saw her would have dreamed of that tragedy of by-gone years in which she had been so greatly interested, and of which she was thinking that June morning, so like that day at Schuyler Hill when the brightness of her life had so suddenly been stricken out. Should she ever go there again, —ever see that grave which Ettie had promised to keep against her coming? Yes. She would go alone some time across the sea, and lay her face upon the grass which covered her lost love, and tell him of the child that died and whose grave she never saw.

"But I will see it before I go," she said; "I will find where they laid my little one, and it may be—"

She did not finish the sentence, for just then the silvery stroke of a bell reached her ear and she knew she was wanted within. She found Mrs. Sinclair with many letters lying open before her, and one in her hand which she had evidently just read, and which seemed to disturb her.

"I am sorry to call you when I know how fresh and bright it is out doors," she said, as Edith came to her side, "but I find here a letter, written weeks ago, which must be answered at once. It is from my brother——"

"Your brother!" Edith repeated, in some surprise, for that was the first allusion she had ever heard Mrs. Sinclair make to any near relatives.

"Yes, my half-brother Howard," was the reply. "I've never spoken of him because—because,—well, there was a kind of coldness between us on account of his wife, whom I did not like. He brought her here when they were first married, and had she been a duchess she could not have borne herself more loftily than she did. I did not think her manners in good taste, and told my brother so; and as he was in the heyday of his honeymoon and saw nothing amiss in his Emily, we had a little tiff and parted coldly, and I have not seen him since. Regularly at the birth of his children he has written to me, and just

before you came he wrote to say that Emily was dead. I answered, of course, and said I was sorry for him, and that I should be glad to see him and his children. There are three of them, and the eldest, a boy, bears my maiden and married name, Godfrey Sinclair Schuyler——”

“Schuyler!” Edith said, and if possible, her always white face was a shade paler than its wont at the sound of that name.

But Mrs. Sinclair was intent on her letter, and did not look at her as she replied :

“Yes, my brother is Howard Schuyler, and his father, who was of English descent, married my mother, Mrs. Godfrey, when I was seven years old, and took us to New York, where mother died when Howard was a baby. I stayed in New York till I was seventeen, and then came back to live with my aunt and have seen but little of Howard since.”

“And does he live in New York !” Edith asked ; and Mrs. Sinclair replied :

“Yes, or rather a little way out, in the town called Hampstead, on the Hudson river. He has a beautiful place, I am told, which they call Schuyler Hill.”

“And you have news from him ?” Edith said next, her heart beating rapidly at the lady’s reply.

“Yes. He is in Scotland, it seems, and wrote to know if I could receive him and his son Godfrey about this time,—let me see, the 15th of June he said, and this is the 14th. I was to answer at once, and direct to Edinburgh, where he would wait my reply. His letter was written ten days ago, and I am so much afraid he has become impatient at not hearing from me, that he will perhaps go directly to the continent without stopping here at all. My head feels so badly, would you mind writing a few lines for me, just to say that I am home, and shall be glad to see him ?”

“Certainly not,” Edith answered in a voice which did not in the least betray the storm of feeling she experienced at being thus unexpectedly brought face to face as it were with a past she had almost outlived.

To stay in that room with Mrs. Sinclair while she wrote to

Colonel Schuyler was impossible, and asking permission to withdraw, she went to her own chamber to be alone while she penned a letter which by some one of those subtle emotions or presentiments which none can explain, she felt would influence her whole future life. She could not understand it, nor did she attempt to seek a reason for it, but she felt certain that Colonel Schuyler was the arbiter of her fate, and that with his coming would begin a new era for her, and her hand trembled so at first that she could scarcely hold the pen, and much less write a word. At last she commenced :

"Oakwood, June 14th, 18—, Colonel Schuyler," and there she stopped, overpowered with the memories which the sight of that name evoked. Once more she stood with her lover at the garden gate, and saw the night fog creeping across the river, and heard in the distance the faint rumble of the fast coming train which had thundered by just as she gave her boy-husband the last good-by kiss, and fastened in his button-hole the rose, which she still carefully preserved together with a silken curl cut from baby's head during the first days of her maternity.

How every little thing connected with that curl and rose came back to her now, and for an instant she felt faint and sick again, just as she had felt when they brought the dead man in and carried him out again. In her desolation she had said : "I hate the Schuylers," and she almost hated them now, even though she knew them innocent of any wrong to her. Col. Schuyler she remembered as a tall, fine-looking man, and she had him in her mind just as he was when he stood in the garden path and glanced wonderingly up at her as she called out the name and age and birth-place of the poor youth whose memory he wished to honor. That was the only time he had ever seen her, and she had no fear that he would recognize her now. So it was not this which made her tremble as she again took up her pen to bid him come to Oakwood, his sister's country-seat. It was a shrinking from she did not know what, and after the letter was written and approved by Mrs. Sinclair, she felt tempted to tear it up instead of giving it to the servant whose

duty it was to post it. But this she dared not do, and the letter was sent on its way, and as soon as it was possible to receive an answer one came to Mrs. Sinclair, who read aloud at the breakfast table :

"DEAR SISTER HELEN :—Yours of the 14th received and contents noted. Shall probably be with you the day after you get this. Godfrey will accompany me.

"Truly, your brother, HOWARD."

"That is so like Howard," Mrs. Sinclair said. "Short and crisp and right to the point. One would almost think he had no heart, and yet I know he has, though he is very peculiar in some things, very reserved, and very proud, and a great stickler for justice and honor. Why, I do not suppose he would say or act a thing he did not mean even to save his life or that of his best friend."

"Yes," Edith said, idly toying with her spoon and feeling a still greater dread of this man of honor, who would not act a lie to save his life. "Yes : how old is he ?"

"How old ? let me see. I was past eight when he was born, and I am forty-nine ; that makes him almost forty-one ; quite a young man still, and fine looking, too. I dare say he will marry again ;" and, glancing across the table at the beautiful lady sitting there, a curious thought sprang into Mrs. Sinclair's mind, which, however, had no echo in Edith's heart.

She had asked Col. Schuyler's age more for the sake of saying something than from any curiosity, and she hardly heard Mrs. Sinclair's reply, so little did she care. His age or personal appearance was nothing to her. It was his presence in the house she dreaded, because it would awaken so many unpleasant memories, and take her back to a time she had almost forgotten in the pain which had come to her during the later years. But he was coming to-morrow, and at Mrs. Sinclair's request she herself saw that his room and Godfrey's were made ready, and then at another request from her mistress she practised her best instrumental pieces, for "Howard used to be fond of music, and was sure to like Miss Lyle's playing."

"Try that little Scotch ballad, please. I thought your voice stronger when you sang it to me last. Strange that it should have left you so suddenly! What was the cause of it, did you say?" Mrs. Sinclair asked.

"A sudden shock to my nerves when I was sick," was Edith's reply, and she felt again the iron fingers on her throat, and that choking sensation as if her heart were leaping from her mouth.

Mrs. Sinclair was very fond of music, especially of singing, and knowing this, Edith had frequently sang to her some simple ballads which were written so low as to come within the compass of her weak voice, but she could not do it now, and excusing herself, she rose from the piano saying she had a headache and needed fresh air.

"I have not seen mother since my return. She was out the day I called, and if you are willing I would like to go into town this morning; the ride will do me good."

Mrs. Sinclair was willing, and accordingly an hour later a handsome carriage stopped before Mrs. Dr. Barrett's gate, and Edith went slowly up the walk toward the open door.

CHAPTER VIII.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

THE world had not gone very well with Mrs. Dr. Barrett since her husband's death. Her house was too small to admit of many lodgers, and as those who came were mostly Americans, they did not stop long, and required so much of her that she was glad when they left, hoping to do better the next time. A pain under her left shoulder made it hard for her to sew, and but for Edith's generosity she would have been badly off. Edith was very kind to her, and gave her the larger part of her salary, and Mrs. Barrett was very proud of her daughter, even though that daughter had sorely disappointed her in not having married or shown any disposition

to do so, nor, so far as Mrs. Barrett knew, had she received but one offer, and that from so questionable a quarter that a refusal was the only alternative. She had been away from home when Edith called upon her the day following her return from the Continent, but she found the card which Edith left, and when her maid glowingly described the carriage, and the beautiful young lady who came in it, she said, with a great deal of pride, "That was my daughter."

"And sure she walked as if the ground wasn't good enough for her to step on," was Kitty's mental comment, as she wondered at the difference between mother and child.

After that day Mrs. Barrett was constantly expecting Edith, and once she thought of going to Oakwood to see her, but on the occasion of her first and only visit there, Mrs. Sinclair, whose likes and dislikes were very strong, had conceived a great aversion for her, and had intimated to Edith that though she was at liberty to visit her mother when she pleased, it was not desirable that the latter should come often to Oakwood. Knowing this, Mrs. Barrett did not like to venture, and she remained at home, waiting impatiently for Edith until the morning when she saw at last the well-known carriage at the gate, and Edith coming up the walk.

How beautiful she was, and how like a princess she looked even in her simple muslin dress and straw hat, with a lace scarf around her graceful shoulders. Everything which Edith wore became her well, and now with a faint flush on her cheeks and a sparkle in her eyes, she had never seemed fairer to the proud mother than when she swept into the house with a grace and dignity peculiarly her own, and put up her lips to be kissed. Mrs. Barrett was glad to see her, and asked her many questions concerning her journey, and admired her dress, and scarf, and boots, and gloves, and asked what they cost, and told about herself, how she had but one lodger now, and that he found fault with everything, and that the day before she had received application for rooms from a respectable looking woman, who seemed to belong to the middle or lower class. "Indeed, she said, she had been out to service before her marriage, but that

her husband had left her a few shares in the — Bank, so that she was quite comfortable now."

"I never thought I would take any one who was not first-class," Mrs. Barrett said, "but my purse is so low that I should have made an exception in favor of Mrs. Rogers if she had not told me her cousin was waiting-maid at Oakwood."

"Oh, that is Norah Long," Edith answered indifferently, and her mother continued :

"It seemed like coming down, to lodge and serve a cousin of Mrs. Sinclair's maid, and when she said she had a little girl about eleven years old, and that she wished her to have a room by herself, I made that an excuse for refusing her. I could not give up my best room to a child, I said, and I did not care to take children, anyway."

"I think you were very foolish, mother; if this Mrs. Rogers would pay well, and is respectable, why not take *her* as soon as another? The child is certainly no objection, and it might be pleasant to have it in the house."

"Perhaps so, but I did not like the woman's manner. When she asked for the extra room I told her it belonged to my daughter, Miss Lyle, who was travelling with Mrs. Sinclair, of Oakwood. 'Oh, Miss Lyle,' she said, 'I have heard my cousin speak of her. She is very beautiful, I believe.' I thought her impertinent, and answered, 'People call her so. Can I do anything more for you?' Even then she did not go, but offered me a shilling more than my price for the rooms. Indeed, she seemed resolved to have them, and only a positive refusal on the ground of not liking to have the child availed to send her away. I never thought I should be reduced so low that the cousin of a servant would insist upon lodging with me," and Mrs. Barrett began to break down a little; then rousing herself, she said, suddenly, "Edith, will you never marry and raise me out of this? Did you find no one abroad?"

"No one, mother," and Edith flushed to her forehead, while her voice had in it a tone of irritation, as she continued: "How many times must I tell you that I do not go about the country trying to sell myself. I am willing to work for you as long as

I have strength, but marry I never shall, and probably could not if I would."

"*You*, with that face, say you could not marry!" Mrs. Barrett exclaimed.

And Edith rejoined :

"The man who would take me for my face alone I do not want, and the man whom I could respect enough to marry must know all my past, and, after knowing it, how many, think you, would care to have me?"

There was a gesture of impatience on the part of Mrs. Barrett, but, before she could speak, Edith continued :

"Colonel Schuyler, of Schuyler Hill, is expected at Oakwood to-morrow."

"Colonel Schuyler!" and Mrs. Barrett *was* surprised. "How does he happen to come to Oakwood?"

"He is Mrs. Sinclair's half-brother. I never knew it until the other day, and Lady Emily is dead, and he is travelling in Europe with Godfrey."

"Lady Emily dead! She was a sweet-mannered lady, and young, too. Why, Colonel Schuyler cannot be very old. Not much past forty, I am sure, and he was very fine-looking."

Edith had risen to go, and did not in the least understand what was in her mother's mind; and buttoning her long gloves, she said :

"While Colonel Schuyler is there, Mrs. Sinclair's time will be occupied with him, and she will not have so much need of me. I will try to see you oftener. I wish I could take you out of this altogether, mother, for I know how distasteful the life is to you after having known one so much better; but my salary is not large, and Mrs. Sinclair will never raise it. It is a principle of hers to give so much and no more. If she were not so kind, I would try for another situation."

"No, no," the mother said, in some alarm; "don't leave Oakwood on any account. I've always felt that something would come of your being there. I can do very well as I am, only it was humiliating to have that Mrs. Rogers, who had been in service, come to me for rooms, and act as if she were my equal."

"I do not see it in that light, mother," Edith said. "If Mrs. Rogers is respectable, and can pay, I advise you to take her. It is far better to have some one permanently, than the changing, floating class you usually have about you. Beside that, it must be pleasanter to have a decent woman in the house than a lot of foreign men of whom you know nothing. Suppose I speak to Norah, and tell her you will take her cousin if she has not secured apartments elsewhere ; and if she wants my old room for her child, let her have it. I do not occupy it often, and would rather some nice little girl was in it than any one else. Yes, I think I'll speak to Norah." And without waiting for her mother to object, even if she wished to do so, Edith went hastily down the walk to the carriage waiting for her.

She found Mrs. Sinclair asleep, and Norah mending a lace handkerchief for her outside the door.

"Norah," she said, "has your cousin, Mrs. Rogers, yet suited herself with lodgings ?"

"No, ma'am. She was just here. You must have met her and the little girl somewhere in the park. You would have noticed the child."

But Edith had been too much occupied with her own thoughts as she drove through the park to see the woman and child sitting on a bench beneath the trees, and looking curiously at her as she drove by.

"No, I met no one," she said ; "but I wish you would see your cousin, and tell her that Mrs. Barrett, of Caledonia Street, No. —, will accommodate her with rooms."

"Two rooms ?" Norah asked.

And Edith replied :

"Yes, two rooms, if she likes, and pays in advance."

"She's sure to do that," Norah answered, quickly ; "and she's able, too. Her man left her well beforehand, and the child has something, too. That's what makes Mary,—my cousin, please,—so careful of her. She isn't her own, you see ; she's adopted, and has a little money, and Mary worships her as something different from common ones ; and well she may, for a sweeter, prettier lass was never born in England than little Gertie Westbrooke."

There was a sound in Mrs. Sinclair's room, and Edith hastened to remove her hat and scarf so as to be in readiness for the lady when she was needed, and what Norah had said to her of her cousin and the child was scarcely heeded, except, indeed, the name, Gertie Westbrooke, which struck her as very pretty, and twice that day she caught herself repeating it, while in her dreams that night it seemed constantly in her mind ; and when at an early hour she woke from a troubled sleep, her chamber was full of the faint echoes of the name of the little girl who was to occupy her old room and bed in Caledonia Street.

CHAPTER IX.

GODFREY SCHUYLER.

IT was the day after Edith's visit to her mother, and taking advantage of the hour when Mrs. Sinclair took her after-lunch nap, she went out with her book into the grounds, and strolled on until she came to a clump of trees at the farthest extremity of the park, where was a little rustic chair. This had always been her favorite resort, the place she sought when she wished to be alone, and here she sat down, ostensibly to read, but really to think,—not so much of the past as of the future. That her kind, indulgent mistress, who had been an invalid for so many years, was failing fast, was very apparent to her experienced eyes, and only that morning she had observed that the handkerchief Mrs. Sinclair held to her lips after a paroxysm of coughing had a faint coloring of blood upon it.

“And where shall I find a home like this when she is gone ?” Edith asked herself, sadly. “I might go back to mother and help her with her sewing, and take Kitty's place,” she said, shuddering a little as she thought of the small house in Caledonia Street, so different from the pleasant home which had been hers for more than two years.

She might go out as a governess again, but when she remembered the insult which she had twice received when a governess

once from the young man of the house, who looked upon her as lawful prey, and once from the master, a brutal wretch who could not withstand her beauty, she thought any life preferable to that. Her face and manner were both against her, and if Mrs. Sinclair died, her only safety was in her mother's house.

"Yes, that will be the end of it," she said, a little bitterly, as she remembered all her mother had hoped for her and what she had once hoped for herself.

So much was she absorbed in these reflections that she did not at first see the two gentlemen who had entered the Park by a side gate, and were walking slowly up the path, which led directly past the chair in which she was sitting. Two young gentlemen she thought them, for one at least was very young, with a supple, springy grace in every movement, while the other, whose step was quite as rapid, though it had more dignity and character in it, could not be old, or even middle-aged, with that fine, erect form, that heavy, silken beard, and wealth of dark brown hair. That it could be Col. Schuyler and his son she never dreamed, for though Mrs. Sinclair had said her brother was not forty-one, Edith, who, like most young people, held forty as an age bordering on antediluvianism, thought of him always as a grayish-haired man, with a stoop, perhaps, and a slow tread, and not at all like this man coming so swiftly toward her, and pointing out something in the Park to his companion. He had evidently been at Oakwood before, for she heard him say :

"We ought to see the house from this point. This must be a new path since I was here, and yet I remember that little foot-bridge. Your mother and I used often to come down to it ; she liked to see the water falling over the white stones. That was nineteen years ago."

"Hush-sh, father ! look, there's a young lady sitting in the shadow of those trees," came warningly from the younger man, or boy, and then with a great heart-throb, Edith knew who the strangers were and arose to her feet.

They were quite up to her now, and both removed their hats and stood with heads uncovered, while the elder said to her :

"I beg your pardon, miss, but will this path take us directly to the house at Oakwood? I was here many years ago and ought to know the way, but it seems a little strange to me."

His voice was very pleasant and his manner deferential as he stood looking at her, while Edith replied that the path did lead directly to the house, which could be seen as soon as he reached the slight elevation yonder. Then with eyes cast down she stood waiting for him to pass on, she thinking of that one time when she had spoken to him from the window of the cottage in far-off Hampstead, and he thinking of the marvellous beauty of her face, and wondering who she could be.

"Some guest at Oakwood, undoubtedly," he thought, and then he put another question to her and said, "Do you know if Mrs. Sinclair is at home this morning? I am her brother, Colonel Schuyler, from America, and this is my son Godfrey."

With a bow to both gentlemen Edith replied :

"Mrs. Sinclair is at home, and is expecting you. I am Edith Lyle, Mrs. Sinclair's hired companion."

She said this proudly, and with a purpose not to deceive the gentlemen with regard to her position longer than was necessary. She had so often been spoken to by strangers in just the respectful, deferential tone with which Colonel Schuyler had addressed her, and then had seen the look of unmistakable interest give place to one of surprise and indifference when her real position was known, that she wished to start fair with these guests of her employer, and she was neither astonished nor disappointed when she saw the peculiar look she knew so well steal over the grave, proud face of Colonel Schuyler, who bowed as he said :

"Oh, yes. I knew she had some young person staying with her. Thanks for your directions. We shall find our way now very well. Come, Godfrey."

But Godfrey was in no particular haste. A beautiful girl was attractive to him under all circumstances, whether the daughter of a hundred earls or the paid companion of his aunt, and his manner had not changed one whit when Edith announced herself as his inferior according to the creed of the *beau monde*.

"Come, my son," Colonel Schuyler said again, and then Godfrey passed on with a look at Edith, which plainly meant "I'd enough sight rather stay with you, but you see it's impossible."

It was the old, old story ; contempt from the older ones and impertinence from the younger so soon as she was known for a dependant, Edith thought, and a few hot, resentful tears trickled through the white fingers she pressed to her eyes as the two men walked away and were lost to view over the hill. And yet for once she was mistaken. Colonel Schuyler had felt no contempt for her ; he never felt that for any woman, and the change in his manner, when he found who she was, was involuntary, and owing wholly to his early training, which had built a barrier between himself and those who earned their daily bread ! He had taken Edith for the possible young lady of some noble house, and was disappointed to find her only the companion of his sister, but a lady still, judging from her manners and speech ; while Godfrey would sooner have parted with his right hand than have been rude to any woman.

A dress, whether it hung in slatternly folds around a washer-woman, or adorned the daughter of a duchess, was sacred in his eyes, and though in a certain way he had all the pride of the Schuylers and Rossiters combined, it was a pride which prompted him to treat every one kindly. His mother, who had been very fond of him, had done her best to make him understand that, as a Rossiter and Schuyler, it behooved him to demean himself like one worthy of so illustrious a line of ancestry ; but Godfrey did not care for ancestry, nor blood, nor social distinctions, and played with every ragged boy in Hampstead, and sat for hours with old Peterkin the cobbler, and kept little Johnnie Mack at Schuyler Hill all day when his mother was out working, and the child would have been alone but for this thoughtfulness. Everybody knew Godfrey Schuyler, and everybody liked him, especially the middle and poorer classes, to whom he was as the brightness of the morning.

An intolerable tease, Godfrey was something of a terror to his eldest sister Julia, whose imperious and sometimes insolent man-

ners he mimicked and ridiculed, while to Alice Creighton of New York, who he knew had been selected for his wife, he was a perpetual source of joy and annoyance,—joy when he treated her with that tenderness and gentleness so natural to him in his intercourse with girls, and annoyance when even with his arm around her waist he mimicked her affected ways and her constant allusions to “when I was abroad.”

In stature Godfrey was tall, with a graceful, willowy form, a bright, though rather dark complexion, soft, laughing blue eyes, with a world of mischief in them, and rich brown hair which clustered in curls about his forehead, and which he parted in the middle until his sister Julia, who did not like it, called him a prig and an ape, while Alice, who did like it, said it was “pretty, and just as the young noblemen wore their hair when she was abroad.” That was enough for Godfrey. If Alice Creighton liked it because she saw it abroad, he surely would not follow the fashion, and the next morning at breakfast his curly locks were parted on the side very near to his left ear, and a black ribbon bound two or three times around his head to keep his refractory hair in its place.

“If ever he went abroad he hoped he should not make a fool of himself,” he said, and now that he was abroad, he bristled all over with nationality, and wore his country outside as plainly as if he had had placarded on his back, “I am an American, and proud of it, too.”

Nothing was quite equal to New York in his estimation, and he was particularly averse to the rosy, healthy-looking girls whom he everywhere met, and in his first letters to his sisters and Alice he told them they were beauties compared with the English girls; “even if Alice’s nose was a pug and Jule’s forehead so low that it took a microscope to find it, and Em’s ankles no bigger than a pair of knitting-needles.”

But when he came upon Edith Lyle, in her simple white wrapper, with her perfectly transparent complexion, and the knot of blue ribbon in her golden brown hair, he acknowledged to himself that here at last, even on English soil, was a woman more beautiful than anything he had ever seen across the water,

and he took off his hat and stood uncovered before her as readily as if she had been the queen. That she was only his aunt's companion, instead of the high-born lady he had at first supposed her to be, made no difference with him. She was a woman, and as he reached the little hill beyond where she was sitting, he turned to look at her again, and said :

"By George, father, isn't she a beauty?"

Mr. Schuyler knew to whom his son referred, and answered, in his usual grave, quiet way :

"She had a fine profile, I thought. Yes, certainly, a remarkable profile."

They were near the house by this time, and in the excitement of meeting with his sister and the long conversation which followed, Colonel Schuyler hardly thought of Edith again until dinner was announced and she came in with Godfrey. That young man had soon grown tired of listening to talk about people and things dating back to a time he could not remember, and had sauntered out into the grounds in quest of Edith, who was more to his taste than the close drawing-room and the invalid on the couch.

Edith was in the summer-house now, and Godfrey joined her there, and in his pleasant, winning way asked if he was intruding, and if he might come in and occupy one of the chairs, which looked so tempting under the green vines.

"It was an awful bore to hear old folks talk about a lot of antediluvians," he said ; "and if she did not mind he would sit with her awhile."

Edith nodded assent and motioned him to a chair, which he took, and removing his soft hat and brushing back his curls, he said :

"Now let us talk."

To talk was Godfrey's delight ; and to Edith's interrogatory :

"What shall we talk about?" he replied :

"Whatever you like ;" and when she rejoined :

"Tell me of yourself and your home in America," he mentally pronounced her a fine girl, with no nonsense about her ; and in less than an hour had told nearly all he knew of himself

and of his family. They had a splendid place in Hampstead, he said, not so big and rambling as the fine houses in England, but pleasanter every way, and more home-like, with such a fine view of the Hudson and the blue mountains beyond.

"You have never been in America?" he said, affirmatively, thus saving Edith the necessity of answering, "and so you do not know how beautiful the Hudson is. Why, it beats the Rhine all to nothing."

"Have you seen the Rhine?" Edith asked, smiling at this enthusiastic youth, so wholly American.

"No," and Godfrey blushed as he met her smile; "but I've read of it, and heard Alice Creighton rave about it by the hour, and still I know the Hudson is ahead. You ought to see it once in the neighborhood of the Highlands; the view from our tower is magnificent, with those blue peaks stretching away in the distance, and rising one above the other until I used to think them the stairs which led to Heaven."

How Edith's heart throbbed as she listened to his description of a place she, too, knew so well, though of her knowledge she dared not give a sign; and how she longed to question her companion of that grave on the hillside! But she could not, and as Godfrey evidently expected her to say something, she asked if he had always lived in Hampstead.

"No; I was born on Fifth Avenue, in a brown-stone front, so that the first breath I drew was sufficiently stuffy and aristocratic; but I went to the country when I was five or six years old. Father took the old house down and built the new one. I never shall forget it,—never, for the dreadful thing which happened."

Edith knew just what was coming, and steeled herself to listen to the details of that tragedy which had colored her whole life. Again the fingers of iron were clutching her throat, while Godfrey told of the young man whom he liked so much, and who had saved another's life at the loss of his own.

"And when they reached him, the grass was red with blood, and he lay white, and still, and dead."

Godfrey's voice trembled as he said these words, and he

paused a moment in his tale, while Edith clasped her hands tightly together and tried to speak, but could not for the smothered sensation choking and stifling her so.

"We buried him in our own lot, and bought him a grand monument, and there are many flowers round the spot," Godfrey continued : and then he glanced at Edith, and starting up, exclaimed : "Why, what is the matter ? You are whiter than a ghost. You are not going to faint ? You must not faint ! I don't know what to do with girls who faint. Alice did it once, or made believe, and I kissed her and brought her to quick."

He did not kiss Edith, but he fanned her with his soft hat until she waved him off, and found voice to say :

"It is the heat, and your vivid description of that poor fellow's death. Did you tell me he was married ?"

She asked the question from an intense desire to know if anything had ever been said of herself in connection with the dead.

"No, he was not married, but there was some talk of an *affaire du cœur* between him and a young English girl, who went off soon after. There's a bug on your dress, Miss Lyle. Why,"—and, as if it had just occurred to him, Godfrey continued,—"your name is the same as his. It cannot be, though, that you were at all related. He lived up near Alnwick. On our way from Scotland, father and I hunted up his friends, a sister and widowed mother,—poor but honest women, as the biographers say. The mother lives with her daughter, and we gave them a thousand dollars, and the young woman promised to call her little boy after me. The Governor,—that's father,—did not quite like it, I guess, but I don't see the harm. Why, I've named three different Dutch babies in Hampstead, all the children of Mrs. Peterkin Vandeusenhisen. Two of them are twins,—and I called one Godfrey Schuyler, and the other Schuyler Godfrey,—while the third, which happened to be a girl, was christened Alice Creighton,—that's a young lady from New York, father's ward, who is at Hampstead a great deal,—and so proud ! You ought to have seen her bit of a pug nose go up when she heard the Dutch baby baptized. Why, she nearly

jumped out of her skin when Mrs. Van,—as I call her for short,—on being asked for the name, replied: ‘Alice Creighton Vandusenhisen, if you please.’ The last was a suggestion of my own, by way of making a more striking impression on Alice, because you see, Mrs. Vandusenhisen had a son,—Peterkin, junior, who was in love with Miss Creighton, and used to send her cakes of maple sugar and sticks of molasses candy he made and pulled himself. You ought to see his hands! The day before the christening I dressed up like a gypsy and deceived the girls and told their fortune, and said Alice would marry a Dutchman, with a long name, like *Vandue* something. So complete was my disguise that they did not suspect me, and when Alice heard the name at church, Alice Creighton Vandusenhisen, she started up as if to forbid the banns, and then catching sight of my face she understood it at once, and was so angry, and when we were home from church she cried and said she hated me and would never speak to me again. But she got over it, and last Christmas sent a wax doll with a squawk in its stomach to her namesake.”

Godfrey had wandered very far from the woman on the heather hills who had called Abelard Lyle her son, and though Edith wished to know something more of her she did not venture to question her companion lest he should wonder at her interest in an entire stranger. She had laughed immoderately at his account of the babies named for himself and Miss Alice, and when he finished she said:

“You must be very fond of children, I think.”

“Yes, I am. I’d like a houseful, and when I marry I mean to have enough boys to make a brass band. I told Alice so once, and her nose went higher than it did when she heard the baby’s name. She called me a wretch, and an insulting dog, and said she hated boys, and me most of all. I knew she didn’t, though, because you see,—well, Alice has ten thousand a year, and that will straighten the worst case of turn-up nose in the world. She is an orphan and father is her guardian, and he and mother and Uncle Calvert, that’s my half-uncle and Alice’s, too, put their heads together and thought she’d be a good match

for me, and it is rather an understood thing that we will marry some time, but I don't believe we are half as likely to as if they'd said nothing about it. A fellow don't want his wife picked out and brought to him off-hand as Eve was brought to Adam."

Here Godfrey paused, and rising from his chair shook down his pants, a habit of his when he was interested or excited, and as his sister Julia said, "had talk on the brain." He certainly had it now, for Edith was the first one he had found whom he had cared to talk to since leaving the ship, and after two or three shakes he resumed his seat, and told her of himself particularly; how he was going to college the next year, if he was home in time, and after that intended to study law and distinguish himself, if possible."

"Mother was very proud of me, and hoped great things of me," he said. "I do not wish to disappoint her, for though she is dead, I cannot help thinking that she knows about me just the same, and when I am tempted to yield to what you call the small vices, I always feel her thin white hand on my head where she laid it not long before she died, and said, 'Be a good and great man, Godfrey, and avoid the first approaches of evil.' Mother was what they call a fashionable woman, but she was good before she died, and so sure as there is a heaven, so sure she is there, and I've never smoked, nor touched a drop of spirits, nor sworn a word since she died, and I never mean to either."

Godfrey's voice was low and tender, and his manner subdued when he spoke of his mother, but very different when he touched upon his sisters and ridiculed Julia's fine lady airs and Emma's readiness to be *stuffed*,—his definition for believing everything she heard, even to the most preposterous story. They were at Schuyler Hill now, he said, and Alice was there too, studying with their governess, Miss Browning, who, between the three, was awfully nagged, though she was quite as airy and stuck-up as Alice and Jule, and called him "that dreadful boy!"

"Boy, indeed! and I most eighteen, and standing five feet ten in my socks, to say nothing of this incipient badge of man."

hood," and he stroked complacently his chin and upper lip where the beginning of a brown beard was visible.

How he rattled on, his fresh young face glowing and lighting up with his excitement, and how intently Edith listened and watched the play of his fine features, and admired his boyish beauty! Surely in him there was nothing but goodness and truth, and as she looked at him she felt glad that his young life was spared, though she could not understand why her husband must have been sacrificed for him. Once in her bitterness she had felt that she hated Godfrey Schuyler, but she did not hate him now, and as she walked slowly with him toward the house, she would have given much to have been as fresh, and frank, and open as he was, instead of living the lie she was living. And to what intent? What good had the deception ever done her? What good *could* it do her, and why continue it longer? Why not be just what she was, with no concealment hanging over her, and startling her oftentimes with a dread of discovery? Why not tell Godfrey all about *herself* just as he had told her of *himself*? Surely, his recent talk with her would warrant such confidence, and why not commence at once a new life by openness and sincerity, even though she lost her place by it?

"I'll do it and brave my mother, who alone has stood in my way so long," she thought; and she began: "Mr. Schuyler"—but before she could say more, he interrupted her with:

"Don't call me that. I'm too much of a boy. Call me Godfrey, please, unless the name is too suggestive of 'Godfrey's Cordial,' in which case say Schuyler, but pray leave off the Mister till my whiskers will at least cast a shadow on the wall. Why, I dare say I shall call you by your first name yet. You cannot be much my senior. How old are you, Miss Lyle?"

It was a question which a little later in life, when more accustomed to the world and its usages, Godfrey would not have asked; but Edith answered unhesitatingly; "I am twenty-seven."

"Zounds!" said Godfrey. "You don't look it. I did not imagine you more than twenty. Why, you might almost be my

mother! No, it will never do to call you Edith. Father's eyebrows would actually meet in the centre at such audacity on my part; that's a trick he has of scowling when disagreeably surprised. Notice it sometimes, please. The only wrinkle in his face is that valley between his eyes."

They were in the hall by this time, and bowing to her voluble acquaintance, Edith passed on to her room, where for half an hour or more she sat thinking of the strange Providence which had brought her so near to her past life, and wondering, too, what the result would be, and if she should tell Godfrey as she had fully intended to do, when he interrupted her with his tide of talk. It did not seem as easy to do it now as it had a little while ago; the good opportunity was gone and might not return.

While thus musing the dressing-bell rang, and turning from the window she began to dress for dinner with more interest than usual. Her salary would not allow a very extensive or expensive wardrobe, even if she had desired it, which she did not. Her taste was simple, and she was one of the few to whom every color and style is becoming. Whatever she wore looked well upon her, and in a little country town she would undoubtedly have set the fashion for all. Selecting now from her wardrobe a soft, fleecy, gray tissue, with trimmings of pale blue, her favorite color, she tied about her throat a bit of rich lace which Mrs. Sinclair had given her, and wore the pretty set of pink coral, also that lady's gift. It was not often that she curled her hair, but to-day she let two heavy ringlets fall upon her neck, and knew herself how well she was looking, when, at the ringing of the second bell, she descended to the hall where Godfrey was waiting for her. He had thought her very handsome in her morning wrapper and garden hat, and when he saw her now he gave a suppressed kind of whistle, and with as much freedom as if she had been Alice Creighton, or one of his sisters, said to her, "Ain't you nobby, though!"

It is doubtful if Edith knew just what *nobby* meant, but she set it down as an Americanism, and knew she was complimented.

"Allow me," Godfrey said, and offering her his arm, he com

ducted her to the dining-room, where his aunt and father were already assembled.

CHAPTER X.

COLONEL SCHUYLER.

HE looked up in some surprise when he saw the couple come in, and the scowl between the eyes, of which Godfrey had spoken, was plainly perceptible.

"My son is getting very familiar with that girl," was his thought ; but he was very polite to Edith, who sat near to him, and during the dinner he occasionally addressed some remark to her, while his eyes wandered often to her face with a questioning look, which brought a bright color to her cheek, and made her wonder if he was thinking of the young girl who had looked at him from among the vine leaves and told him Abelard's name.

He was not thinking of her ; he was only speculating upon the rare beauty of the face beside him, and trying vaguely to recall where he had seen one like it.

"In some picture gallery ; a fancy piece, I think," was his conclusion, as with a growing interest in Edith he resolved to question his sister concerning her at the first opportunity.

As yet he had only talked with Mrs. Sinclair of the past, and all that had come to them both since their last meeting years ago. She had told him of her life and failing health, so apparent to him that, as she talked, he had involuntarily taken her thin hands in his, and wished he had come to her sooner ; and then he told her of himself and his children and his wife, who, whatever she might have been while living, had died a good true woman, and gone where neither a Rossiter nor Schuyler is preferred, but only they who have His name upon their foreheads. Of Godfrey he had spoken with all a father's pride for his only son, saying he hoped that this trip would tone him down somewhat and make him more of a man and less of a wild, teasing

boy ; but of Edith he made no mention. Indeed, he had not given her a thought until he saw her come in on Godfrey's arm, when there awoke within him a strange kind of interest in her, and an inexplicable feeling that in some way she was to affect him or his. He supposed her much younger than she was, and noticing Godfrey's evident admiration he inly resolved to leave London very soon and take the lad out of harm's way, if indeed any harm threatened him from this beautiful woman, who fascinated and attracted him as well.

"Sister," he said to Mrs. Sinclair, when dinner was over and they were alone together, "who is this Miss Lyle ? She has a remarkable face."

Most women have a hobby, and Mrs. Sinclair's was Edith, of whom she was never tired of talking. She had liked her from the first, and two years of intimate acquaintance had only increased her fondness for the girl, and for hours she would sit and ring her praises if she could but find a listener. So, now, when her brother said what he did, she began at once :

"Yes, she is a remarkable person every way. She has been with me more than two years, and I like her better every day. Such a face and figure are rarely seen in this country, and her manners would become a royal princess ; and yet she is only the daughter of a poor curate, who must have made a foolish marriage with one not his equal. I cannot endure the girl's mother. I've never seen her but once, and then she impressed me very unfavorably, as if she was not real, you know. Edith must be like her father. He is dead, and the mother takes in lodgers."

"Ah," and Colonel Schuyler's voice was indicative of disappointment, but his next question was : "How old is this girl ?"

"Twenty-seven, I believe," was the reply, "though she looks much younger."

"Yes, she does. I thought her about twenty," Colonel Schuyler said, and with his fear for Godfrey removed, he arose and joined the young people, who had just come through a side door into the music room.

"Edith," Mrs. Sinclair called, "play something for my brother."

It was Mrs. Sinclair's right to command, Edith's business to obey, and without a word of dissent she sat down and played, with Godfrey on one side of her and the colonel on the other, both listening with rapt attention to her fine playing, and both admiring the soft, white hands which managed the keys so skillfully.

"Edith, dear, sing that pathetic little thing,

'I am sitting alone to-night, darling.'

You can surely manage that, it is written so low," Mrs. Sinclair said; and rising from the couch where she had been reclining, she came into the music room, and explained to her brother: "Her voice is not strong and cannot reach the higher notes. She had a great fright when she was quite young, wasn't it, Edith?"

"Yes," Edith answered faintly, as she felt the iron hand closing around her throat and shutting down all power to sing even the lowest note.

"I don't like sitting alone at night, darling. I'd rather have somebody with me, so give us your jolliest piece," Godfrey said, making Edith laugh in spite of herself, and lifting the invisible hand, so that her voice came back again; and, at Mrs. Sinclair's second request, she sang:

"I am sitting alone to-night, darling,
Alone in the dear old room;
And the sound of the rain,
As it falls on the pane,
Makes darker the gathering gloom.

"For I know that it falls on a grave, darling,
A grave 'neath the evergreen shade,
Where I laid you away,
One bright autumn day,
When the flowers were beginning to fade."

Oh, how soft and low and sweet was the voice which sang the song of which Abelard Lyle had been so fond, and there was almost a tear in Godfrey's eye, and the colonel was begin-

ning to look very grave, when the white hands suddenly stopped and fell with a crash among the keys, while Edith gasped, "I can't finish it; the iron fingers are on my throat, just as they were that dreadful day."

She evidently did not quite know what she was saying, and her face was deathly pale.

"You are sick, Miss Lyle; come into the air!" Colonel Schuyler said, and leading her out upon the veranda, he made her sit down, while Mrs. Sinclair brought her smelling-salts, and Godfrey hovered about disconsolately, remembering the scene in the summer-house, and wondering if she had such spells often. And, having knocked his head against his father's, when they both stooped to pick up Edith's handkerchief, he concluded he was *de trop*, and walked away, saying to himself: "I do believe he is hit real hard. Wouldn't it be fun to call that regal creature mother!"

He laughed aloud at the idea, but did not think it would be fun, and did not quite believe in his father's being "hit," either; but when half an hour later he returned and found the Colonel still sitting by Edith, who had recovered herself, and was talking with a good deal of animation, he felt irritated and impatient, and went off to his room and wrote in his "Impressions of Europe," a kind of journal he was keeping of his tour, and which he meant to show "the girls," by way of proving that *one* American could go abroad and not indorse everything he saw, and make a fool of himself generally. His entry that night was in part as follows:

"Oakwood is a fine old place, with an extensive park, a smoke-house, fine stables, a dog-kennel, and seven servants, to take care of two unprotected females. Edith Lyle, aged 27, is the handsomest woman I ever saw, even in America. Her features are perfect, especially her nose, which might have been the model for the Greek Slave. Not a bit of a pug, and her eyes are large and soft and liquid, as those of the ox-eyed Juno (I like that classical allusion; it shows reading), while her ears are the tiniest I ever saw,—just like little pink sea-shells,—and her splendid brown hair, with a shade or two of yellow sunshine

in it, rippling back from her smooth white brow, just exactly curly enough, and natural, too, I'll be bound. She don't put it up in crimps, not she. Why, what a scarecrow Alice Creighton was, though, that time I caught her with those two forks hanging down about her eyes, with a kind of clamp or horse-shoe on them. I like people natural, as I am sure Edith is. I wonder what makes her go off into a kind of white faint all of a sudden. She did it twice to-day, and I would not wonder if she was given to fits. The governor is hit, sure. I never knew him seem as much interested in any one before. The idea of his leading her into the air and then holding those salts to her nose till he strangled her,—bah !”

And, while Godfrey wrote thus in his journal, his father sat talking to Edith, and wondering to find how much she knew and how sensibly she expressed herself. Colonel Schuyler was not a man of many words, and seldom talked much to any one, but there was something about Edith which interested him greatly, and he sat by her until the twilight began to close around them, and his sister came to warn him against taking cold and exposing Edith, too. Then he went into the house, and, without exactly knowing it, felt a little disappointed when she left the room and did not come again.

Colonel Schuyler kept a journal, too, in which he occasionally jotted down the incidents of the day ; and that night, after recounting his arrival at Oakwood and his grief at finding his sister so great an invalid, he added :

“She is exceedingly fortunate in having secured a most admirable person for her companion. Besides being educated, and refined, and beautiful, Miss Lyle impresses me as a remarkable woman. Yes, as a very remarkable woman.”

The next night Godfrey recorded :

“There is nothing quite so foolish as an old man in love ! I wonder if he thinks she can care for him !—and yet he blushed to-day when I found him turning the leaves of her music and listening to her singing. I never knew him listen two minutes to Alice and Jule,—and no wonder, such operatic screeches as they make when Professor La Farge is there, and the boys in

the street stop and mock them. Edith's voice is the sweetest I ever heard, and so sad that it makes a chap feel for his bandanna. Why, even father told auntie that her singing made him think of poor Emily, meaning my mother! It is a bad sign when a live woman like Edith Lyle makes a man think of his dead wife. I wonder what she thinks of him! She looks as unconcerned as a block of marble; but you can't tell what is in a woman's mind, and widowers are awful. Why, there have been forty women after father already; but I must say he has behaved admirably thus far, and never spoken to a bonnet outside our own family, unless it were to Miss Esther Armstrong, and that is nothing. She is the Hampstead school-ma'am, and has thrashed me more than twenty times."

In Colonel Schuyler's journal the record was as follows:

"I wonder if my dear Emily knows how much Miss Lyle's singing makes me think of her and her grave under the evergreen, where we did

'Lay her away, one bright autumn day,
When the flowers were beginning to fade.'

Miss Lyle has a singularly sweet, plaintive voice, and it affects me strangely, for I did not know I cared for music. Emily never sang, and the young ladies at home make very singular sounds sometimes. It is strange about her losing her voice, or rather her power to reach the higher notes. It must have been a fearful shock of some kind, and she evidently does not like to talk of it; for, when I questioned her a little and advised her seeing a physician, she seemed disturbed and agitated, and even distressed. Dr. Malcolm at Hampstead would know just what to do for her, and she ought to have medical advice, for she has a remarkable voice,—a very remarkable voice."

When Colonel Schuyler liked a thing, it was *remarkable*, and when he liked it very much, it was *very* remarkable; so, when he wrote what he did of Edith and her voice, he had passed upon her his highest encomium.

Four weeks went by, and he still lingered at Oakwood, and on the last day of the fourth week wrote again:

"I fully expected to have been in France before this time, but have stayed on for what reason I hardly know. It is very pleasant here, and my sister's health is such that I dislike to leave her so soon, even though I leave her in excellent hands. Miss Edith is certainly a very remarkable person, and I am more interested in her than I have been in any one since I first met my dear Emily."

Here the colonel paused, and laying down his pen went back in thought to the time when he was young and first met Emily Rossiter, the proud, pale, light-haired girl, whose two hundred thousand in prospect had made her a belle in society, and little as he liked to own it now that the daisies were growing above her, had commended her to his consideration. His courtship was short, and wholly void of passion or ecstasy. She knew he was a suitable match and she wished to go abroad, and accepted him readily enough, and they were married without so much as a kiss exchanged between them. He had so far unbent from his cold dignity as to hold her hand in his own while he asked her to be his wife, but as soon as her promise was given he put it back in her lap very respectfully, and said, "That hand is now mine," and that was the nearest approach to love-making which he reached with Emily. After marriage he was scarcely more demonstrative, though always kind and considerate, and when at her father's death it was found that her fortune was one hundred thousand instead of two, he kept it to himself if he felt any chagrin, and never in a single instance checked her extravagance, but suffered her in everything to have her way. At the last, however, when she stood face to face with death, and her life with him lay all behind, there came a change, and he could yet feel the passionate kiss which the white lips pressed upon his as they called him "dear husband."

"Poor Emily," he said, aloud; "we were very happy together."

Just then, upon the terrace below there was the sound of a clear, sweet voice, which thrilled him as Emily's never had, and Edith looked up to the windows of the room adjoining his.

where Godfrey was calling to her. It was a beautiful face, and as he watched her gliding away among the shrubbery he thought how she would brighten and adorn his house at Schuyler Hill, and how proud he should be of her when his money had arrayed her in the apparel befitting his wife. Every barrier of pride and prejudice and early training had gone down before Edith Lyle's wonderful beauty, and the proud, haughty man was ready to offer her his name and hand on one condition. Her mother could not go with her, and in taking him she must give up her family friends, if indeed she had any besides the mother. He knew nothing against Mrs. Barrett, but his sister disliked her, and that was enough, if he ignored, as he tried to think he did, the fact that she took in lodgers and sewing. Many highly respectable ladies did that, he knew, but he had a feeling that Edith's mother was not highly respectable, and he doubted if she was a lady even. His sister, when questioned with regard to Edith's family, had reported the mother as a pushing, curious, disagreeable woman, who assumed to be what she certainly was not.

"Edith is not like her in the least, and must inherit her natural refinement and delicacy from her father," Mrs. Sinclair had said, and the colonel was satisfied if one side of the house was *comme il faut*.

As a Schuyler he could afford to stoop a little, and he felt that it was stooping to marry his sister's hired companion. As far as position was concerned, he might as well take poor, plain Ettie Armstrong, the village schoolmistress, who in point of family was undoubtedly Edith's equal. There was, however, this difference. The people at home could know nothing of Edith's antecedents, save that she was an English girl and the daughter of a curate; while another fact, which outweighed all else, was her exceeding great beauty and queenly style, which, with proper surroundings and influence, would place her on the highest wave of society. And he was ready to give her the surroundings and the influence, and felt a thrill of exultant pride as he saw her in fancy at the head of his table and moving through his handsome rooms, herself the handsomest appendage there.

"I may as well settle it at once," he thought, and the next day he found his opportunity and took it, with what success the reader will learn from a page in Edith's diary.

CHAPTER XI.

EDITH'S DIARY.

OAKWOOD, *July 15th, 18—.*

AM I dreaming, or is it a reality that Col. Schuyler has asked me to be his wife? He says he thinks I am more beautiful than any woman he has ever seen, and that I would make such a rare gem for his house at Hampstead, and he would surround me with every possible luxury. And in his voice, usually so cold and calm and impassioned, there was a little trembling, and his forehead flushed as he went on to state the one condition on which he would do me this honor :

"My mother must have no part in my grandeur! She must remain here. If necessary, money should be freely given for her needs, but she could not live with me!"

Poor mother, with all her planning and her dreams of my brilliant future she never once thought that when the chance came she would be left out and have neither part nor lot in the question! What would she say if she knew it, and what will she say when I tell her I refused him? For I did, and told him it could never be. For a moment, though, weak woman that I am, I was tempted to end this life of dependence and poverty, and take what he offered me; not his love: he never hinted at such an emotion, and I think that feeling is rare in such natures as his. I doubt if he felt it for the Lady Emily, whom he married in his May time, and surely now in his October he has no place for foolishness of that kind. He does not love me, but he admires my face and form, and would no doubt be very kind and careful of me, just as he would be kind to and careful of a

favorite horse whose looks depended on such treatment. He would hang upon me jewels rare, with silks and laces and satins, and I could wear them and feel my heart break afresh each time I looked from my window across the lawn to that grave under the evergreen where Abelard is lying. I should hear him discussed, and with Colonel Schuyler stand by the mound and listen to a story I know so well, and loathe myself for the lie I was acting, for if I was there as Colonel Schuyler's wife, my life would be one tissue of falsehood and deceit. He, of all men in the world, would not take me if he knew the truth, and during that interval when I hesitated I had resolved not to tell him! I would go to him, if I went at all, as Edith Lyle the maiden, and not Edith Lyle the widow. But only for an instant, thank Heaven, did the tempter have me in his control ere I cast him behind me with the resolve that whatever else I might do, I would be frank with the man whom I made up my mind to marry, and as I had not made up my mind to marry Colonel Schuyler, I did not tell him who I was. I only declined his offer, and said it could not be, and when his remark that I did not know what I was doing angered me, I burst out impetuously :

"I do know what I am doing. I am refusing a match which the world,—*your* world, would say was far above me ; but, Colonel Schuyler, poor as I am, and humble in position, I am rich in the feeling which will not let me sell myself for a name and a home. And if I accepted you it would be only for that. I respect you. I believe you to be sincere in your offer, and that you would try to make me happy, but you could not do it unless I loved you, and I do not ; besides——"

Here he stopped me, and took both my hands in his, and seemed almost tender and lovable as he said

"Edith, I did not suppose you could love me so soon, but I hoped you might grow to it when you found how proud I was of you, and how I would try to make you happy."

"Colonel Schuyler," I interrupted him, "you have talked of your pride in me, and your admiration of me, but you have said nothing of love. Answer me now, please. *Do* you love me ?"

He wanted to say yes, I know, for his chin quivered, and there was in his face the look of one fighting with some principle hard to be overcome. In his case it was the principle of truth and right, and it conquered every other feeling, and compelled him to answer :

"Perhaps not as you in your youth count love. Our acquaintance has been too short for that ; but I can and I will ; only give me a chance. Don't decide now. I will not take it as a decision if you do. Wait till my return from the Continent, and then tell me what you will do. I had hoped to take you with me, and thought that the glories of Rome, seen by me twice before, would gain new interest with your eyes beside me. But my sister needs you ; stay with her during my absence, and try to like me a little, and when I come back I know I can say to you, ' Edith Lyle, I love you.' "

I was touched and softened by his manner quite as much as by what he said, and I replied to him, gently :

"Even then my answer must be the same. My love was buried years ago. I have a story to tell you of the past."

Again those dreadful fingers clutched my throat as I tried to tell him of Abelard, and my dead baby, buried I knew not where. My voice was gone, and my face, which was deadly pale, frightened him I know, for he led me to the window and pushed my hair from my brow and said to me :

"Edith, please do not distress yourself with any tale of the past. You say you have loved and lost that love, and let that suffice. I suspected something of the kind, but you are not less desirable to me. I have loved and lost, and in that respect we are even ; so let nothing in the past deter you from giving me the answer I so much desire when I return to Oakwood. Godfrey is coming this way. I hear his whistle ; so good-night, and Heaven bless you, Edith."

He pressed my hand and left the room just as Godfrey entered the door in another direction, singing softly when he saw me :

"She sat by the door one cold afternoon,
To hear the wind blow and look at the moon ;
So pensive was Edith, my dear, darling Edith "

He did not get any farther, for something in his light badinage jarred upon my feelings just then, and assuming a severe dignity, I said :

"You mistake the name. I am not Edith. I am Miss Lyle."

He looked surprised an instant, and then, with a comical smile and a shaking down of his pants, he said :

"I beg your pardon, Miss Lyle. I meant Kathleen O'Moore, of course, but seeing you at the moment I made a mistake in the name, and no wonder, dazed as I am with a letter just received from Alice, who hopes I shall return from my foreign travel greatly improved in mind, and taste, and manners, as if the latter could be improved. She sent her picture too. Would you like to see it?"

He passed me the *carte-de-visite*, and I saw the likeness of a girl who he said was only sixteen, but whom I should have taken for twenty, at least, judging from the dress and the expression of the face, which I did not like. It was too supercilious, if not insolent, to suit me, while the turned-up nose added to the look. And still there was a style about her which marked her as what is called a "high-bred city girl," and I have no doubt she will eventually become a belle, with her immense fortune and proud, arrogant demeanor.

"What do you think of it?" Godfrey asked; and feeling sure that with regard to her his feelings could not be wounded, I answered :

"I do not quite like her expression, and she looks too old for you."

"Good! I'll tell her that some time when she is nagging me unmercifully," Godfrey said, adding: "I had a letter from Jule too, with her photograph, and also one of our house and grounds. This is Julia."

It was the face of a brunette, dark, handsome, but proud and imperious, and I was glad that she was not to be my step-daughter.

"Jule is handsome, except her ears, which are as big as a palm-leaf fan," Godfrey said, and I replied :

"Yes, she is handsome, and will make a brilliant woman."

"This is our home," he continued, and he put into my hand a large photograph of the house on Schuyler Hill, and a considerable portion of the grounds.

There were the tops of the evergreens, and there was a white stone shining through the green, and I said to Godfrey,

"Whose monument is that?"

"That? Let me see. Why, that is young Lyle's, the man who saved my life. You remember I told you about him? Mother's is farther on and out of sight."

How faint and sick I felt to have Abelard's grave thus brought near to me, and there was a blur before my eyes, which, for a moment, prevented me from seeing distinctly. Then it cleared away, and I was able to examine the picture and see how the grounds had been improved since that morning when Abelard's blood was on the grass where now the flowers were growing. It was a fine place, and as I looked at it and thought it had been offered me, ay, might yet be mine, if I would take it, did I feel any regret for having refused it? None whatever. If I were to tell Col. Schuyler everything I should never go there, and if I were to go without telling him my life would be one of wretchedness and hatred of myself. No, better bear with poverty and servitude than live a greater lie than I am living now. So I gave the picture back to Godfrey, and bidding him good-night, came up to my room, where I could be alone, to think over the events of that eventful day.

EXTRACT FROM GODFREY'S JOURNAL.

What a regal creature Edith is! and I do believe father thinks so too, but that would be an awful match for her. **Jul**e would scratch her eyes out, and if ever I should marry Alice, which I never shall, but if I do, and bring her home to Schuyler Hill, wouldn't I have lively times between step-mother and wife; but that is too absurd to consider for a moment. I wish she was younger or that I was older. Let me see,—'most eighteen from 'most twenty-eight, leaves ten. No, that will

never do. A man may not marry his grandmother, much less a boy, as Jule calls me in her letter, giving me all sorts of advice, and hoping I will overcome that habit of wriggling,—meaning the way I have of shaking down my pants. As if I knew when I did it. Alice's letter was a very good one, only why need she call me "Dear Godfrey" when I'm not her 'Dear Godfrey, and never shall be. Why, she looks older than Miss Lyle herself in that picture, with her hair stuck on the top of her head like a heathen Chinee. I believe I'll tear the picture up. Miss Lyle did not like it, neither do I, and I will not have it in my possession. I wonder if Miss Lyle would give me hers. I mean to ask her to-morrow."

He did ask her and received no for his answer, and then tore up Alice's photograph, and packed his valise, and with his father set off for Paris the following day.

CHAPTER XII.

EDITH AND HER MOTHER.

AND *you refused him?*"

"Yes, mother, I refused him."

"Are you crazy, child?"

"Not as crazy as I should be to accept him."

Edith was sitting with her mother in the little house in Caledonia Street, when the above conversation took place. It was the day of Col. Schuyler's departure for Paris, and she had driven into town, with permission to stay to tea if she liked. She had not intended to tell her mother what had been said to her by the colonel, but when questioned of him something in her manner excited Mrs. Barrett's suspicion, and in her usual forcible way she wrung from her daughter the fact that Schuyler Hill had been offered to her and refused. To say that Mrs. Barrett was angry would feebly express her emotions. In all her dreams for Edith she had never hoped for anything quite equal to an alliance with Col. Schuyler, and now that she had

wilfully thrown the chance away she was exceedingly indignant, and expressed her disapprobation in terms so harsh and bitter that Edith, who seldom felt equal to a contest with her mother's fierce, strong will, roused herself at last and answered back :

"Mother, you have said enough, and you must stop now and listen to me. You upbraid me for having thrown away the chance for which you have waited so long, and to which you say you have shaped every act of your life since I was born, and you accuse me of ingratitude when you have done so much for me. Mother, for all the real good you have done me I am grateful, and you know how gladly I will work for you so long as I have health and strength to do so, but for the secrecy you have imposed upon me with regard to my past life I do *not* thank you, and could I go backward a few years, or had my baby lived, I would have no concealments from the world. To me it is no shame that I was once the wife of Abelard Lyle; the shame is that I try to hide it, and when Colonel Schuyler asked me to be his, the truth sprang to my lips at once, and but for that terrible choking sensation which came upon me when you took baby away, I should have told him all."

"And ruined your prospects forever," Mrs. Barrett said, angrily.

"Yes, ruined them forever so far as Col. Schuyler is concerned, but that would have mattered little," Edith answered, proudly. "I have no love for him; he has none for me. I asked him the question, and he could not tell me yes. His fancy was caught, and he talked of my beauty, and grace, and voice, and culture, and hinted that I was a fitting picture for his handsome home in Hampstead. You saw Lady Emily once. You remember how pale, and sallow, and thin she was. Neither gems nor rich gay clothing could make her fair to look upon, and I have no doubt her husband would be prouder of *me* than he ever was of her, with all her money and Rossiter blood, that is, if he took me as Edith Lyle, the daughter of an English curate, and nothing more; but once let him know the truth, as he assuredly must have known it if I had for a moment considered his proposition,—and think you he would not have

spurned with contempt the widow of a carpenter, and that carpenter his own hired workman?"

"Not if he truly loved you," Mrs. Barrett interposed; and Edith answered impetuously:

"But I tell you he does *not* love me. He only cares for my personal attractions,—he would like to show me off as his young English bride, whose family must be ignored, for, mother, he told me that distinctly; he said he knew nothing of my friends, and did not care to know, as he wished for me alone; that if I married him, you must stay behind,—a mother-in-law always made more or less trouble, and he preferred to have you remain where you are, and if money was needed for your support, it should always be forthcoming in sufficient amount for every comfort."

"And yet he knows nothing of me to dislike," Mrs. Barrett faltered, her countenance falling, and her eyes having in them a look of disappointment.

That she was to be set aside and have no part in Edith's grandeur, had never occurred to her, and in fancy she had already crossed the sea and was luxuriously domesticated at Schuyler Hill, as the mother of the mistress and general superintendent of everything, with plenty of money at her command, and herself looked up to and envied by the very people who had once treated her slightly, and who would never suspect of having known her as Mrs. Fordham. She looked much older now than she had eleven years ago, and her hair was white as snow, while the deep black she wore constantly was a still more complete disguise. So there was no danger of detection,—no link to connect her with the cottage by the bridge where she once lived, or that grave under the evergreen. But all this was of no avail. Col. Schuyler would not have her on any terms, and knowing this she was the more easily reconciled to Edith's decision, until by dint of questioning she learned that the colonel did not consider the matter settled, but would urge his suit again on his return to England. Then her old ambition revived, and with a mother's forgetfulness of self, she thought, "She shall accept him then. I will see her a lady even if I starve in a garret."

But she wisely resolved to say no more upon the subject at present, and Edith had arisen to go, when down the stairs came the patter of little feet, and a sweet, childish voice was heard warbling a simple Scottish ballad, and Edith caught a gleam of bright auburn hair falling under a white cape bonnet, as a young girl went past the window and out upon the walk.

"Whose child is that? Has Mrs. Rogers come?" she asked, and Mrs. Barrett answered:

"She has been here nearly two weeks, and that is little Gertie Westbrooke."

CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. BARRETT'S LODGERS.

MRS. ROGERS had received a message from her cousin Norah, which sent her again to Caledonia Street, where she found Mrs. Barrett more civil than before, and more inclined to let her rooms. Some little hesitancy there was, it is true, with regard to the chamber which had been Edith's, and where she now occasionally spent a night.

"Surely your daughter can sleep with you, and does not require an extra room," Mrs. Barrett said; and Mrs. Rogers replied:

"I prefer that she should have a room to herself. As I told you before, she is not my child, and I am more particular on that account to bring her up different. She has as good blood in her veins as many a would-be fine lady."

So Mrs. Barrett gave up the point and prepared Edith's old room for little Gertie, to whom Mary was as devoted as if she had been a scion of nobility. If Mrs. Barrett had cared for children she would have been interested in Gertie at once, but as it was she did not notice her particularly till she had been for several days an inmate of the house. Then one afternoon, as she sat at her sewing, her ear caught the sound of a sweet voice singing a familiar air. Something in the tone of the voice ar

rested her attention, and carried her back to the time when Edith was young and sang that very song. Moving her chair so that she could command a better view of the back porch where Gertie sat, she noticed for the first time how very pretty she was. She was rather small for her age, and had a round, sweet face, with a complexion like wax, and the clearest, sunniest blue eyes, which seemed fairly to dance when she was pleased, and again were so dreamy and indescribably sad in their expression as if the remembrance of some great sorrow had left its shadows in them. The long, thick eyelashes, and heavy arched brows gave them the appearance of being much darker than they really were, and when the lids were raised one was surprised to find them just the color of the summer sky on a clear, balmy day. But Gertie's hair was her greatest point of beauty, her bright, wavy hair which in her babyhood must have been almost red, but which now was auburn, with a shading of gold in it. Taken altogether, she was a very beautiful child, and one whom strangers always noticed and commented upon, and even Mrs. Barrett, as she sat watching her, felt a sudden throb of interest in her, and thought of another little one, who might have called her grandma and made her old age happy.

"Gertie," she said, after a moment, "come here, please. I want to talk with you."

Startled by the voice and a little surprised to be addressed by the cold, quiet woman who had never before evinced the slightest interest in her or scarcely spoken to her, Gertie arose, and coming timidly to Mrs. Barrett's side, stood waiting for her to speak.

"Gertie," Mrs. Barrett began, "have you always lived in London?"

"Yes, ma'am, but not with auntie," was Gertie's reply: and Mrs. Barrett continued: "With whom then did you live?"

"With my mamma, who died when I was two years old," was the prompt answer; and Mrs. Barrett went on: "Had you no father then?"

"Why, yes, but—but——;" the child hesitated a little and blushed painfully, then added, "he didn't like me much, I

guess, and when the new mother came, it was very bad, and so auntie, who isn't my auntie, you know, only she lived there and liked me, took me for her own little girl, and I've been so happy with her, though mamma's house was much bigger and nicer than any we have had since, and there were servants there just as there are at Oakwood, only not so many. But I like living with auntie best."

Mrs. Barrett was interested now, and was about to question the child further of that home like Oakwood, when Mrs. Rogers appeared and called the little girl away. That afternoon Mrs. Barrett was attacked with a nervous headache which was so severe as to send her to her bed, where she lay with her eyes closed and moaning occasionally, when a light footstep crossed the floor, and a low, sweet voice said: "You are real sick, aren't you? May I do something for you?" and before Mrs. Barrett could speak, two soft hands were pressed upon her aching head, which they rubbed and caressed until the throbbing ceased entirely, and the pain was less hard to bear. Gertie was a natural nurse, and she smoothed the lady's pillow, and folded up a shawl and put it away and adjusted the shutters to exclude the light and still admit the air, and did it all so quietly and noiselessly that Mrs. Barrett would hardly have known she was there.

"You are very kind," she said, "and I thank you so much, but don't trouble yourself any more. I shall do very well now."

"Oh, I like to take care of you," Gertie answered. "It's funny I know, but you see I make believe I am caring for my grandma. I have one somewhere, auntie says, although I never saw her, and I guess she don't like me very well."

"Not like *you*!" Mrs. Barrett exclaimed. "How can she help it?"

"You see she don't know me," Gertie answered. "If she did, maybe she would. Do you like me?"

The question was put timidly, and the little face was very grave until the answer came, "Yes, very much;" then it flushed all over, and the blue eyes shone like stars while the warm red lips touched Mrs. Barrett's cheek so lovingly, as Ger-

tie exclaimed: "I am so glad. I want to be liked. I want everybody to like me."

A desire to be loved was a part of Gertie's nature, and with it she seemed to possess the faculty of making everybody love her, even to Mrs. Barrett, who, after that day, was exceedingly kind to the little girl, and ceased to care because she was an occupant of Edith's room. That there was some history connected with her she was sure, but no questioning on her part availed to elicit any more information than had been volunteered during their first interview. Mrs. Rogers must have cautioned Gertie not to talk of her parents and old home, for she was very reticent, and answered evasively whenever Mrs. Barrett broached the subject to her, as she did once or twice.

"Auntie can tell you," was her reply, when asked where her father had lived, and as Mrs. Barrett did not care to talk to Mrs. Rogers, she knew nothing definite of little Gertie Westbrooke when Edith came to see her and brought news of her rejection of the colonel.

CHAPTER XIV.

COLONEL SCHUYLER RETURNS.

OAKWOOD, *May 25th, 18-*



OLONEL SCHUYLER:—Your sister, Mrs. Sinclair, is lying very low, and desires to see you as soon as possible.

"Respectfully,

EDITH LYLE."

This short epistle found Col. Schuyler in Florence, and brought him back to England at once. During the winter and the early spring Mrs. Sinclair had been failing, and when May came, the change in her for the worse was so perceptible that she asked Edith to write for her brother, whom she wished to see once more. To Edith the thought of losing her kind mistress was terrible, for, aside from the genuine love she bore the

lady, she knew that losing her involved also the loss of the home where she had been so happy, and she dreaded to encounter the curious suspicions she would have to meet alone and unprotected.

"What will you do when I am gone?" Mrs. Sinclair said to her one day when speaking of her approaching decease, and as Edith made no reply, except to cover her face with her fingers, through which the tears trickled slowly, she went on: "You seem to me like a daughter, and I shrink from the thought of leaving you alone. If it were possible I would make you independent, but at my death the Oakwood property reverts to a nephew of my husband's, and I cannot control it. I can, however, do something for you, and will. Edith, I have never mentioned the subject to you before,—but, was there not,—did not my brother offer himself to you last summer when he was here?"

"Yes," came faintly from Edith; and Mrs. Sinclair continued:

"And you refused him, subject, I believe, to a reconsideration?"

"I refused him, and with no thought of reconsideration on my part. My decision was final," Edith said; and Mrs. Sinclair continued:

"It is not for me to dictate in such matters, perhaps, but it seems to me you will do well to think of it again should he renew the matter on his return. It is an offer which any woman should consider seriously before rejecting it. I *know* he can make you happy, and you would far better be his honored wife even if he is many years your senior, than be cast upon the world with your face and manner as a lure to evil-minded men, who hold a governess as only fair spoil."

"I know it; I know all that, and feel it so keenly," Edith answered, and for an instant there came over her such a feeling of utter loneliness and desolation, and such a shrinking from the future which might be to her what the past had been until she knew Mrs. Sinclair, that she would almost have taken Colonel Schuyler had he been there then.

Smothering her sobs and commanding her voice as well as she could, she continued :

"I would rather die than meet again what I have met in the families where I was employed before I knew you, but mother is poor and growing old, and I must do something."

"Why not take the home offered you?" Mrs. Sinclair asked, while Edith sat motionless as a stone, her face as white as ashes, and that horrid sensation in her throat which kept her from uttering a word.

When at last she could speak she astonished Mrs. Sinclair by falling on her knees beside the bed, and crying out :

"Oh, Mrs. Sinclair, you do not know, you cannot guess what and who I am, or you would know that could never be. Forgive me, I have been an impostor all these years, but now I must speak and tell the whole, and then you shall judge if your proud brother, knowing all, would take me for his bride."

Twenty minutes passed, and then Edith sat, paler and more motionless, if possible, than before, her hands pressed tightly together, and her eyes cast down as if afraid to meet the wondering gaze fixed upon her. She had withheld nothing, and Mrs. Sinclair knew the entire story, from the hasty marriage in New York, up to the day when the message came that the little baby was dead. She had been astonished and shocked, and indignant with the mother rather than with the daughter, who, she readily saw, had been only a tool in an ambitious, heartless woman's hands, and whom she could forgive for a deception which had wronged no one and in which no one but herself was as yet involved. So, when at last she spoke, her voice was just as kind and gentle as of old, as she said :

"My poor child, yours is a strange experience for one so young. Truth is always best, and it would have been just as well if it had been confessed at first. I am glad you have told me ; and if my brother asks you again, as I think he will, you must tell him. It may make a difference with him. I do not know. Certainly it would, if withheld till after marriage. That deception he would hardly forgive. Leave me now, please ; I

am very tired, and you, too, need the open air after your great excitement."

The next day Col. Schuyler came alone, as Godfrey was in Russia. But Mrs. Sinclair was too weak to talk much, and could only look her pleasure at her brother's presence. Three days after she died, with her head on Col. Schuyler's bosom and Edith kneeling at her side. Just at the last she had taken the girl's hand, and putting it in that of her brother had whispered:

"Take care of her, Howard. She is worthy, and has been like a daughter to me."

"I will," he answered, emphatically, as his hand closed tightly over that of Edith, who felt as if that hand-clasp bound her to the fate which she had no longer power to resist.

Immediately after the funeral she returned to her mother's cottage, but before she went Col. Schuyler asked for a private interview, which she granted with a feeling that it was of no use to struggle against what was inevitable. Col. Schuyler had tried to forget her during his travels; had tried to reason with himself that a poor unknown girl, who was his sister's hired companion, was not a fitting match for a Schuyler whose first wife had been a Rossiter. But one thought of the beautiful face, and of the sweet voice which had sung to him in the twilight was sufficient to break down every barrier of pride and make him willing to sacrifice a great deal for the sake of securing her. And so it was that on his return to England he was resolved to renew the offer once made and rejected, and to take no refusal this time. His sister approved his choice, and had sanctioned it with her dying breath, and thus reassured he went to Edith with a feeling of security as to the result of the interview, which manifested itself somewhat in his manner, and made Edith feel more and more how helpless she was, and how certain it was that her secret must be told.

"Edith," he began in his stiff way, as he took a seat beside her, "just before I left Oakwood last August, I held a conversation with you which I know you have not forgotten. I asked you to be my wife, and you asked me if I loved you. I

could not say yes, then, for though I admired and respected, and wanted you, I did not experience any of those ecstatic thrills of which we read in books, and which very young people call love. And even now,"—he paused a moment and hesitated, and a flush spread itself over his face, "even now I may not feel as a younger man would in similar circumstances; but when I tell you that you have scarcely been out of my mind for a moment during my absence, that I have dreamed of you night and day, and that in all the world there is nothing I desire so much as I desire you, I think you will be satisfied that if I do not love you as you have imagined you might be loved, I am in a fair way to do so, if I receive a little encouragement."

He paused, but Edith did not speak, and sat before him with her long eyelashes cast down and her hands working nervously together. She knew he was sincere, though his wooing was so different from what Abelard's had been, or what Godfrey's would be were he in his father's place. But Godfrey was young, and Abelard had been young, too, and both were different from this cold, proud man of forty, who had unbent his dignity so much, and who seemed so earnest, and even tender as he went on to tell her of all she had to gain if she would go with him to the home he would make more beautiful than it already was, for her sake. It was a very pleasant picture he drew of the future, but it did not move Edith one whit, because she felt certain that this life could not be hers if she told him all, as she must surely tell him, if he persisted in his suit. She admitted to him that he was not disagreeable to her; that she found his society pleasant; that she believed him to be a man of honor, who would try to make her happy; and when he asked why she hesitated, she opened her lips to tell him, but could not speak the words.

"I can write ther better," she thought, and when she could command her voice, she said to him: "Give me a few days, a week, in which to think, and then I will write you my decision. I know you honor me, and I thank you for it, and believe you sincere, and for that reason, would not for the world deceive

you. I have something to tell you which I can better put on paper. Let me go now, for I feel like suffocating."

She spoke slowly and with difficulty, and her face was so white, that Col. Schuyler felt alarmed lest she should faint, and passing his arm around her, led her to the balcony and brought her a glass of water, and laid his hand softly on her hair, and seemed so kind and thoughtful, that for the first time there awoke in Edith's heart a throb of something like affection for this man who might make her so happy.

"Oh, if I only could forget the past and accept the life offered me," she thought, as an hour later he put her into the carriage which was to take her to her mother's, and then pressing her hand deferentially, said to her: "I shall await your answer with a great deal of impatience, and shall not consent to receive an unfavorable one."

He lifted his hat, and the carriage drove away to Caledonia Street, where her mother was expecting her.

CHAPTER XV.

EDITH'S ANSWER.



ERTIE WESTBROOKE had gone to the country with Mrs. Rogers for a few weeks, and Edith occupied her old room, and slept in the child's bed, and dreamed strange things which haunted her waking hours, and sent her heart back to the little one lost long ago with a yearning such as she had not felt in years. And with this pain, this sense of loss still clinging to her, she sat down one morning and wrote the story of her life, word for word, keeping nothing back and finishing by saying:

"If, after knowing all this, you still wish me to be your wife, I will not refuse, but will do my duty faithfully, so help me Heaven!"

She showed the letter to her mother, who, finding that it was

unless to oppose her daughter, offered to take it to Oakwood herself.

"Better so than to trust it to the post," she said. "Besides, it is well for me to be there to answer any questions he may ask, and to take the blame wholly upon myself, as I deserve."

Edith did not refuse. She was rather glad than otherwise to have her mother go as a kind of mediator between herself and the man whom she began to find it would be a little hard to lose. Accordingly Mrs. Barrett arrayed herself in her deepest mourning, and with her thick veil drawn over her face, started for Oakwood and asked for Colonel Schuyler. He had passed the four days drearily enough, and in his impatience had more than once resolved to go to Caledonia Street, and claim Edith's answer. But he had promised her not to do so, and he remained at Oakwood in a state of great suspense, until the day when a lady was announced as wishing to see him.

"It surely cannot be Edith," he thought, as he started for the parlor, where the closely-veiled figure arose and introduced itself as "Mrs. Dr. Barrett, mother of Miss Lyle."

Colonel Schuyler was one of the preoccupied kind of men who take little note of what does not directly concern them, and though he must have heard the name of Edith's mother, he had paid no attention to it, or thought strange that it was not Lyle. Now, however, he noticed it, and with only a stiff bow to the lady said :

"Barrett? Mrs. Barrett? And you Miss Lyle's mother? How is that?"

"I have been twice married, and my last husband was Dr. Barrett," was the reply, which satisfied the colonel, who took a seat at some distance from his visitor and waited for her to communicate her business.

Evidently it was a little awkward for her to do so, for she hesitated and fidgeted in her chair and grew very red under her black veil, and wished Colonel Schuyler would not scan her as curiously as he was doing. At last, with a great effort, she began :

"My daughter has told me all that has passed between you, and I am come with a message from her."

"A message!" Col. Schuyler repeated, in some surprise; "I supposed she was to write."

He did not like this interference by a third person, and that person a woman, whom his sister had described as "pushing and inquisitive," and for whom he had conceived a prejudice without knowing why. She was very deferential, almost cringing in her manner, and her voice was apologetic in its tone, as she replied :

"Yes, I know, she meant to send a letter, and she did commence one yesterday, but grew so nervous over it that she finally gave it up, and allowed me to come instead."

Here she stopped a moment, and her hands worked together restlessly while Col. Schuyler, in haste to know the worst, if worst there were, said stiffly :

"Well, you are here, then, to say your daughter has refused me;" and as he spoke the words, he was conscious of a sharp pang which told him how hard such news would be to bear, and when Mrs. Barrett continued, "No, not to tell you that," the revulsion of feeling was so great that, forgetful of his aversion for his prospective mother-in-law, he arose and came near to her, while she continued :

"Her acceptance depends wholly upon yourself, and how you take the story I am here to tell, and which she could not write. Some years ago, when Edith was very young, scarcely fifteen, she fell in love with a well-meaning, good-looking youth, greatly her inferior in the social scale, though perfectly respectable, I believe. Of course, I opposed it, both on account of her extreme youth and because, as the daughter of a clergyman, with good family blood, she ought to do better. Without my knowledge, however, they were engaged, and would have been married if he had not been suddenly killed. It was a terrible shock to Edith, and one from which she has never quite recovered. You know something of that spasmodic affection of her throat which attacks her at times. It came upon her then, and now when an allusion is made to the violent death of any one, or she is over-excited, she experiences the same peculiar sensation, so that I try to keep her as quiet as possible, and

when I found that writing to you about it, as she felt she must, was affecting her so much, I persuaded her to desist and let me come instead. She is morbidly conscientious, and would not for the world marry you until you knew all about her past life. She loved the young man with such love as very young girls feel; but that was years ago, and now I do not believe she would marry him if he were living. She bade me tell you everything, and say that if, after hearing it, you still wished her to be your wife, she would do her best to make you happy, stipulating only that no reference shall ever be made to a past which it is her duty and wish to forget."

Colonel Schuyler was not much given to talking at any time, and he surely had no desire to speak to his *fiancée* of her dead love. Could he have had his choice in the matter there should have been no dead love between himself and Edith, but when he reflected that he could not offer her his first affection, for that was buried in Emily's grave, he felt that it was not for him to object to this poor, unknown youth who had been obliging enough to die and leave Edith free. A few times he walked up and down the room, then stopping suddenly before the anxious woman, he said, "Your daughter once hinted to me that there was something she must tell me, and as I knew her life must have been pure and innocent as a babe's, I supposed it was a matter of this kind, and am prepared to overlook it, though of course I would rather have been the first to move her maiden heart. I will write her a few lines if you will wait here, and this afternoon or evening I shall see her."

He bowed himself from the room, leaving Mrs. Barrett in a state of fearful suspense as to what he might write to Edith, and whether her wicked duplicity would at once be discovered. In her desire for Edith's advancement she was willing to do anything, and the slight put upon herself was nothing to her now. She would rather have gone with Edith to her beautiful home if she could, but as she could not she accepted the condition, and was just as eager for Edith to accept the colonel as if she too were to share in the greatness. With Edith she felt almost certain that a full confession of the past would at once end every-

thing, for Colonel Schuyler would hardly marry the widow of one of his workmen, and she resolved that he should not know it, at least not in time to prevent the marriage. With Edith his wife he could not help himself, and would make the best of it, if by chance it came to his knowledge, she reasoned, and when she started for Oakwood with Edith's letter it was with no intention of giving it to him. She knew just what she would say to him, and she said it, and then waited the result.

Fifteen minutes went by and then he came back to her, and, handing her a note, said, "This is my message to Miss Lyle. I shall see her this evening and arrange our plans."

Then he meant to go on with it, and Mrs. Barrett could almost have fallen at his feet and thanked him for raising her daughter to the position she had sinned so greatly to secure for her, but the colonel's proud, cold manner kept her quiet, and she only said, as she took the note :

"Thank you, sir ; and please remember not to allude to the past, when you see her. She wished that particularly,—it excites her so much."

"I shall be careful on that point," he said, and with another bow he dismissed her from the room, wondering why he breathed so much freer with that woman gone, and what it was about her which affected him so unpleasantly.

"I know Edith is not like her in the least," he said, "and I will take care to remove her from that influence as soon as possible. Two weeks will not be too soon for our marriage, and when the Atlantic rolls between us I shall be done with Mrs. Barrett forever."

Meantime Mrs. Barrett was on her way to London, and congratulating herself upon the good luck which had not dried the seal of the note the colonel gave her. Had it been otherwise she would have opened it all the same ; but Satan, whose servant she certainly was, was playing into her hands, and the envelope held together so slightly that she opened it with perfect ease, and taking out the letter, read it through with an immense amount of satisfaction, as she saw that she could show it to her daughter and not betray herself.

"My dear Edith," it began, "do not think I prize you less on account of anything in the past, though of course I would rather that past had never been ; but it is not for me, who have loved and lost a wife, to object because of your early love, whose tragical death affected you so strangely. I trust you will overcome that difficulty in time, and be assured, that both for your sake and my own, I shall never in any way allude to the past, nor is it necessary that I should do so. You have been frank and truthful with me, and I thank you for it, and value you all the more. Had it come to me later, I might have found it harder to overlook than I do now. You are very young, and your concealment from your mother is all I can see for which to blame you in the least. Dear Edith, let it all be as if it never had been, and go with me as my wife. I want you more than ever, and I cannot give you up for a trifle. I will see you to-night and arrange for the wedding, which must take place at once, as I have already been absent too long from home, where I am needed so much, and where there will be a warm welcome for you.

"Good-by, darling, till to-night.

"Yours, forever,

HOWARD SCHUYLER."

Had there been anything in this letter to awaken a suspicion in Edith's mind of foul play on the part of her mother, Mrs. Barrett would have unhesitatingly withheld it from her and palmed off some story of her own. But there was nothing, and she hastened home to Edith, whom she found sitting listlessly in her room with Gertie Westbrooke's things everywhere around her, and a look of apathy upon her face, as if she were fully assured of the nature of her mother's tidings. She knew Colonel Schuyler could not forgive, and now that the die was cast, and her chance for something better than a governess' life lost forever, as she believed, she was conscious of a feeling of pain and weariness, and her heart cried out for what she must not have.

As her mother entered the room she lifted her eyes languidly, but said nothing until she read the letter, which made her

pulse quicken with a new hope and a restful feeling she had not known in years.

"What did he say to you?" she asked. "Did you talk with him? Tell me all about it, please."

And Mrs. Barrett told her just what it seemed best to tell, and said she had taken the blame upon herself for the secrecy since Abelard's death, and that though he was, of course, surprised and shocked, he soon recovered himself, and showed how much he was in love by his readiness to forgive and let the past fade into oblivion.

To say that Mrs. Barrett's conscience did not disturb her a little as she thus told lie after lie would not be true; but she had committed herself too far to stop now, and then it was for her interest to prevent any conversation with regard to the past between the Colonel and Edith, and she continued:

"Oh, one thing more I must tell you. Possibly Colonel Schuyler may have said something of the kind in his letter. He is quite as averse to any allusions to the past as you can be, and said distinctly that he did not wish you to mention the subject to him. He is satisfied, and that is enough."

Edith did not reply. She was reading the note again, and feeling a little hurt and disappointed that no direct mention had been made of Abelard.

"He might at least have been generous enough to say how grateful he was to him for having saved Godfrey's life," she said to her mother, who answered:

"He did say that to me, and spoke very feelingly of him, and was glad he honored his memory as he did; but you know how proud he is, and must understand that it would grate upon his pride to think his bride elect had been the wife of his servant. I think myself it would be bad taste in him to go to lauding the dead husband of the woman he intends to make his wife. You surely have no desire to praise the Lady Emily, or even to talk of her, and you must give him the same liberty of reticence."

Edith was silenced and satisfied. If Colonel Schuyler had praised her husband to her mother, that was enough, and she

appreciated the motives which kept him silent to her, and as the day wore on there crept into her heart a feeling of rest, and content, and satisfaction which she had never known before. Colonel Schuyler was a man whom she thoroughly respected and liked, and whom in time she might learn to love if she could overcome the feeling of awe with which his presence inspired her. She knew he would try to make her happy, and she more than once found herself thinking with pleasing anticipations of the beautiful home beyond the sea and the new life awaiting her. Never since the days when she arrayed herself for the coming of Abelard had she felt as much real interest in her dress as she did now when making herself ready for her lover. Choosing a pretty robe of white which had been made in Paris, she fastened a knot of lavender ribbon at her throat, and placing a white rose in her hair, was ready for him when he came at last. His wooing of Emily Rossiter had been the stiffest kind of an affair, and this, his second love-making, was stiff and formal too, as became the man. Still there was in his manner genuine kindness, and even tenderness, as he took Edith's hands in his, and said :

"Are these dear little hands mine?"

"Yes, if you still wish to have them," Edith answered; and then he bent down and kissed them very devoutly, as if fearful lest his breath should blow them away.

This was a great advance on his manner with Emily. To her he had merely said "This little hand is mine," and had put it respectfully back into her lap, reserving his right to kiss her, until she was his wife, while in Edith's case he kissed the hands he claimed as his, and held them in his own a little awkwardly, it is true, as if he did not quite know what he was doing, but still held them and looked at them, and turned them over, and thought how shapely and pretty and white they were, and how they would be improved with the jewels he meant to put upon them. And she would be improved, too, with the rich apparel he would give her; and his heart began to swell with pride as he saw in his home, and at his table, and in society, the beautiful bride, who was sure to be a success. And, as he

talked to her, and watched the color mount into her cheeks, and saw the coy drooping of her eyes, and felt her warm breath upon his face, he was conscious of being moved as he had never been moved before, and his words and tones were almost lover-like as he talked of the future, and all he meant to do to make her happy. And only once was there the slightest allusion to the past, and then Edith said to him: "And you are sure that you do not care for what has made me so unhappy?"

"Care! no. I told you as much in my letter. That is all gone by. Don't let us mention it now, or ever," he said, as he wound his arm around Edith, who felt that she might indeed forget the past, and take the good offered to her in the new life coming.

It was late when Col. Schuyler left her that night, and before he went he had arranged everything with that precision which marked all his actions. They were to be married very quietly within the next three weeks, and then, after a short trip into the country, go at once on shipboard, and sail for America. The bridal outfit would come from Paris, whither he would forward his order the next day. He would also write at once to Godfrey, who would join them in time to be present at the ceremony. There were to be no invited guests, and only a simple breakfast at Oakwood. The heir was there now, but he had offered the hospitality of the house to Col. Schuyler for as long a time as he chose to accept it, and when told of the projected marriage, had asked the privilege of furnishing the breakfast. Thus matters were arranged, and Edith, who had cared and thought for herself so long, was glad to leave everything to Col. Schuyler and let him plan and think for her. She was beginning to like him very much, and when he brought her the engagement ring, and she saw the superb diamond on her finger, she felt a throb of pride and quiet exultation that at last the ease and luxury which her fine tastes fitted her to appreciate and enjoy were to be hers without stint or limit. That morning, too, a French modiste came and took her measure, and when the second night of her betrothal closed in, the

order was on its way to Paris for "an entire outfit for a young bride whose wealth would warrant any expenditure."

CHAPTER XVI.

BREAKING THE NEWS.

GODFREY returned to Oakwood two weeks before the wedding, and brought with him a young artist, Robert Macpherson, whom he had found in Rome, and who had accompanied him to Russia. As he had not received his father's letter he was ignorant of the engagement, and Colonel Schuyler blushed like a school-boy, and stammered and hesitated, when he tried to tell him. Godfrey had asked for Miss Lyle, and the colonel, after replying that she was with her mother, had continued :

"My son, you may be surprised,—no, you can hardly be surprised, knowing her as you do,—when I tell you that I am,—yes, I am about to,—am going to,—give you a new mother. Yes," and the colonel walked to the window and spat on a rosebush outside, and wiped his face, and mustering all his courage, added : "Miss Lyle has promised to be my wife, and you will agree with me, I think, that she is a remarkable,—yes, a very remarkable woman."

He had told his story, and waited for Godfrey's reply, which came first in a low, suppressed whistle, and then in a merry laugh as he jumped up, and giving his pants a violent shake, said : "I agree with you, father ; she is a very remarkable woman, or she would not consent to be my mother and Jule's ; My ! won't she pick her eyes out, and Aunt Christine will help her. Why, *she* meant to have you herself !"

"Who, Christine ?" Colonel Schuyler said, aghast at the very idea of wedding a woman whom he detested, even though she was a Rossiter, and the sister of his wife.

"Yes, she has set her cap at you ever since mother died, and she came up to Hampstead with all her wraps and con-

founded drugs, and raised Cain generally," Godfrey replied, and his father smiled a pleased kind of smile, and, man-like, was conscious of a new interest in the woman who had "set her cap for him," while at the same time he felt intense satisfaction in thinking of Edith in all her youth and brilliant beauty, and comparing her with Aunt Christine, whose body was one great receptacle of drugs, and who, Godfrey said, wore two flannel wraps in the summer, and four in the winter, besides shawls and scarfs innumerable.

Godfrey's preference was evidently for Edith, and so his father said to him: "You do not object. You like Miss Lyle, I believe."

"Like her? Yes, I rather think I do, and if she'd been younger, or I older, I'd have gone for her myself. She's the most splendid woman I ever saw, but, by Jove, I'm sorry for her, though, for what with Aunt Christine, and Alice, and Julia, and Tiffe and Em, she'll have a sorry time."

The colonel frowned darkly, and his eyebrows almost met together as he answered with great dignity:

"Everybody in my house must treat my wife with respect; but, Godfrey, perhaps it may be well in your letter home to speak a good word for Miss Lyle, prepare the way, you know. You have great influence over Julia, or at least over Miss Creighton, which amounts to the same thing. I have written, of course, but would like you to do so, too."

"Certainly, with pleasure," Godfrey said, and there was a merry twinkle in his saucy eyes as he thought of the "hornet's nest" he would stir up at home.

The colonel had that day written to his eldest daughter, Julia, in his usual dignified manner, that he was about to marry Miss Edith Lyle, "a lady of good family, the daughter of a clergyman, the friend and companion of my deceased sister, your late Aunt Sinclair. She possesses many and varied accomplishments, and is, what I consider, a very remarkable person, and I shall expect a kind reception for her, and that all due deference will be paid to her by every member of my household. Break the news to your Aunt Christine, and tell Mrs.

Tiffe to have the rooms in the south wing made ready for Mrs. Schuyler. I have written to Perry about repairing them, but she must superintend it."

This was in part the colonel's letter, while Godfrey's was widely different.

"We are in for a stepmother, sure," he wrote, "and may as well make the best of it. Try to imagine father in love, will you? and such a love! Truly she is 'a very remarkable person,' as you will say when you see her. Just think of father's marrying a red-haired woman of forty, with a limp and glass eye, which looks at you with a squint, and a crack in her voice, which sounds like Ettie Armstrong's old piano, and quite as many aches and pains as Aunt Christine herself! But then, she's nice, and I like her ever so much, while the governor,—well, it is something wonderful to see how far gone he is; and I tell you, girls, one and all, that if you do not treat this beauty with proper attention there will be the old Nick to pay! She will take your breath away at first, for, after all I have said, you have no idea how she looks, and Alice must hold on to her little nose, and Aunt Christine may as well lay in a fresh supply of pills and Crown Bitters, and get her a new galvanic battery. She'll need them all to steady her nerves after the shock the bride will give her. I shall be glad to be home once more, though I do not believe I am greatly improved with foreign travel. I still shake down my pants, and say 'by Jove,' and don't believe I shall be 'so disgusted with New York because it looks so new and backwoodsey,' or that I shall constantly quote 'dear, charming *Par-ee*.' In short, I am just as much a 'clown' as ever, but by way of recompense I mean, if I can, to bring you the nicest kind of a travelled chap, Robert Macpherson, whom I met in Rome, and like so much, even if he does part his hair in the middle, and carry an eyeglass, and put perfumery into his bath, and wear ruffled night-shirts buttoned behind. He's a good fellow, with money, and a profession, too. He is an artist, and his father was cousin to Lord Somebody or other, and I mean to persuade him to come to America with me for you girls to pull caps about. So you've something to live for

besides the new mam-ma, to whom I must pay my respects as soon as I have finished this letter. So no more at present from your brother,

GODFREY."

The young scamp chuckled with delight as he read over this letter and thought what a bombshell it would be in the staid household at Schuyler Hill.

"I haven't written a lie either," he said; "I only told them to *think of* father's fancying such a person, and they will think of it, and Aunt Christine will have a fit and swallow more than a quart of her bitters, and take a shock strong enough to knock her down, and Jule's back will be up, and Alice's nose, and Em will cry, and Tiffe will snort her indignation, and there'll be thunder raised generally."

After these remarks Godfrey folded his letter and shook himself down, and looked in the glass, and started for Caledonia Street to call upon Edith. He found her at home, looking so beautiful as she rose to meet him, with the flush on her cheek, and the new expression of peace and quiet in her eyes, that he was conscious of a sharp pang of regret for the years which lay between them. Then, as he remembered the woman of forty, with the limp and glass eye, and thought of the consternation at Schuyler Hill when his letter was received, and the surprise when the bride herself should arrive, he burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, while Edith looked wonderingly at him, with a rising color in her cheeks.

"You must excuse me," he said, as he held her hand in his. "It seems so ridiculous to think of calling *you* mother."

"Don't do it, please," Edith replied. "I'd rather you would not. Let me be Edith."

And so the ice was broken, and Godfrey plunged into the subject at once, in his half-comical, half-serious way.

"Honestly," he said, "I am real glad you are going home with us. I never liked any one outside of our family as well as I do you, and once I had serious thoughts of making love to you myself! I did, upon my word, but when I sub-

tracted eighteen from twenty-eight, I said 'no go.' So far as years are concerned that is worse than Aunt Christine and father."

"Who is Aunt Christine?"

"Have I never told you of her? Well, inasmuch as you are to be one of us, I may as well enlighten you with regard to the individuals whose stepmother you are to be. Aunt Christine is mother's sister, an old maid, whose love died and left her his money. Since mother's death she has been with us a great deal of her time, quarrelling with Mrs. Tiffe,—that's the housekeeper,—bullying the servants, nagging the governess, and watching to see that father didn't look at a bonnet with matrimony in his eye. You see, she wanted him herself, he forty-one and she forty-six, and looking almost a hundred, with all the drugs and nostrums she takes for her fancied ailments. She has the neuralgia, and catarrh, and dyspepsia, and bronchitis, and liver complaint, and doctors for them all, and has her room as full of bottles as an apothecary's shop, and sits with a dish of tar under her nose, and takes galvanic shocks, and has her hair dressed every day, and wears the richest of silk and finest of lace, and really looks splendidly when she is dressed,—was handsome once, and is very exclusive and aristocratic, and proud of her Rossiter blood, and will never rest until she knows a person's pedigree, root and branch."

There were little red spots on Edith's cheeks and neck as she thought of Aunt Christine finding her out, root and branch. But, after all, what did it matter, so long as her husband knew and did not care? she reflected, and grew calm again, and amused, as Godfrey went on:

"I like her, of course, for she is very kind to me, but I would not have father marry her for the world. Not that he ever thought of it, though she has; and the time he rode out with Ettie Armstrong, the schoolmistress, she was so angry, and wondered how he could let himself down, and he a Schuyler who had married a Rossiter!"

"Ettie Armstrong! That's a pretty name," Edith said, while there came before her mind the vision of a dark-eyed girl who

had promised to care for Abelard's grave, and to whom she had confessed her love for the dead.

"Yes, 'tis a pretty name," Godfrey said; "though Ettie herself is not pretty. She is most an old maid, I guess, and teaches the village school, and thrashed me like fun the summer I went to her, but never hit me a lick amiss. Father rode with her once,—a mere happen-so,—and Aunt Christine was furious. I say, Edith, except his age, father is a catch, and you a lucky fellow. Why, half the women in New York and Hampstead are after him, and have been ever since mother died. Even at her funeral, when the clergyman, in eulogizing her and telling what a loss she was to her family, asked 'Who is there to fill her place?' twenty old maids hopped up——"

"Oh, Godfrey!" Edith exclaimed, shocked at his levity; "you should not talk that way."

Up to this point Godfrey had rattled on as if he had never had a serious thought or known a genuine feeling of affection; but at Edith's rebuke the whole expression of his face changed instantly. His chin quivered, and his voice trembled, as he said:

"You think me, no doubt, an unfeeling wretch, who never cared for anybody; but you mistake me there. I loved my mother so much that I never go to sleep at night without thinking of her in heaven, and praying, in my poor way, that I may go to her some day; and I feel her hand on my head, and hear her dying voice bidding me try to be good; and I have tried every day. I loved my mother dearly, and the knowing that father will marry again brings her back to me, and I've rattled on like a fool just to keep—to keep—to keep from crying out-right for the mother who died."

He was crying now, and Edith cried with him and held his head on her lap, where he involuntarily laid it, while he sobbed out his grief. Nor did she like him less for it. Indeed, the bond between them was stronger than ever, now that she saw how deep his feelings were, and that under his gay exterior was hidden so much genuine affection and sterling worth. As she would have soothed and comforted a brother, she soothed and

comforted him until the little burst was over, and lifting up his head, he said in his old playful way :

"There, I've had it out, and cried in your lap anyway. Quite a little tempest, wasn't it? I say, Edith, you are not to think I don't want you to marry father, for I do. I like you ever so much, and I'm going to stand by you through thick and thin, and at first there'll be more thick than thin, for Julia will not be pleased with a stepmother, and Em will follow Julia, and Alice, who is there a great deal, will sniff any way, and Aunt Christine will ride her highest horse ; but you are sure to win in the end. Only wear your most queen-like air, and keep a stiff upper lip, and act as if born to the purple, and you'll conquer at last, with the governor and me to uphold you. It's a grand old place, and you'll be happy there. Who is that? Look quick, do," he exclaimed suddenly, and glancing toward the window Edith saw a cab standing before the gate, and a plainly dressed woman coming up the walk.

"That is Mrs. Rogers," she said. "She lodges here, but has been absent several weeks. We were not expecting her so soon."

"Mrs. Rogers," Godfrey repeated. "I don't mean that woman. It's the girl in the cab, with the bright hair and blue eyes, and the prettiest face I ever saw. I wish she'd look out again."

"That must be Gertie Westbrooke, Mrs. Rogers's daughter," Edith said. "She is very pretty, I believe, though I have never seen her distinctly."

"Pretty! I should think she was! Why, she's beautiful. I wish Bob Macpherson could see that face and paint it. He went off this morning to find some friends of his, but he'll be back to the wedding. He is an artist I found in Rome. You are sure to like him. I must go now. Good-by, mother that is to be."

He kissed her fondly, and then hurried out to see again the face in the cab. Very curiously he gazed at the child, whose little fat hands went up to the eyes, ostensibly to push back the stray locks of auburn hair, but really to hide the blushing face. How pretty they looked as they lay like white rose leaves against the mass of bright wavy hair, and how Godfrey deplored

the absence of Robert Macpherson, and wished he were himself a painter as he walked away, carrying with him that image of Gertie Westbrooke, with the shy, timid look on her face, the bright hair veiling her soft blue eyes and the white hands brushing back the hair.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BRIDAL.

MARY ROGERS had been in the country for several weeks and had written to Mrs. Barrett that she was to return to London sooner than she had intended, as Gertie was not very well and needed the advice of her physician. To this Mrs. Barrett had at once replied, telling of the approaching marriage and asking Mrs. Rogers to defer her return as long as possible, as Miss Lyle was at home and occupying Gertie's room. Accompanying this letter to Mrs. Rogers was one from Norah Long, who also told of the expected marriage of Colonel Schuyler with Miss Lyle, and the breakfast to be given at Oakwood, and then added that as both the colonel and Miss Lyle wished her to accompany them to America, she had decided to do so, provided her cousin Mary, to whom she was strongly attached, would go too. Colonel Schuyler owned several cottages, he said, and Mary could have one, if she liked, at a low rent.

Two days before the receipt of this letter Mrs. Rogers had heard of the failure of the bank where her money was invested, and knew that henceforth she must earn her own living. This she could do better in America, and after due reflection she wrote to Norah that she would go, and started for London the next day, intending to take up her abode in the vicinity of Oakwood until the time for sailing. And that is how the cab came to be standing at Mrs. Barrett's door. Gertie did not alight, but waited while Mrs. Rogers explained to Mrs. Barrett the change in her circumstances and plans and said that she

would come in a few days and take her things away. Mingled with Mrs. Barrett's exultation at her daughter's good fortune there had been more than one feeling of loneliness and desolation as she thought of being alone in her old age, even if that old age was to be well provided for, as Colonel Schuyler had promised. But there was one comfort left her in little Gertie Westbrooke, whom, with Mary Rogers, she meant to keep as long as possible. She was not fond of children, but no one could resist the bright, sunny little girl who filled the house with so much life and gladness, and whose feet and hands were always ready for some act of kindness. And Mrs. Barrett loved the beautiful child with a strong, intense love, which she could not define, unless it was that the child loved her and hung about her neck with soft caresses and words of love. And now she was going away,—and the woman's heart was heavy as lead, and there were traces of tears on her face as she went about her usual work and thought of the desolate future with Gertie Westbrooke gone.

Owing to Mrs. Sinclair's health Edith had not visited her mother very often during the past year, and had never met Gertie face to face, so she was only sorry for her mother in a general kind of way when she heard that she was to be left alone. She was very much occupied with her own affairs, and Colonel Schuyler and Godfrey took all her leisure time. The colonel came every other day, Godfrey every day, and between them both she had little time for reflection, but was hurried on toward the end, which approached so fast, until at last the very day had come, a soft, warm August day, when the sky seemed to smile in anticipation of the bridal, and the whole earth to laugh for joy. And Edith felt happy and glad and peaceful as she dressed herself for the occasion, and with her mother and Norah Long, her waiting-maid, started for the church near Oakwood, where her bridegroom waited for her, and where just a few of the late Mrs. Sinclair's friends were assembled. Thanks to Godfrey and Robert Macpherson, who had returned from visiting his friends, the little church was decked with flowers, and Edith stood under a canopy of roses as she pledged her

troth a second time, and was made Mrs. Howard Schuyler. Just to the right of the chancel, and where they could command a good view of everything, Mary Rogers sat, and with her Gertie Westbrooke. It was the child's first sight of a wedding, and when that morning Mary had said to her, "Gertie, how would you like to go to church to-day and see Miss Lyle married?" she had clapped her hands for joy, and could scarcely eat her breakfast for thinking and talking of the wonderful wedding.

"Don't they sometimes throw a bouquet at the bride's feet?" she asked.

And when told that they did, she gathered and arranged an exquisite little bouquet, which she tied with a white ribbon, and then, moved by some impulse she did not try to define, she wrote on a slip of paper, in her childish hand :

"From little Gertie Westbrooke, with her love, and God bless you."

This she folded and put inside the flowers, saying to herself :

"She'll know who Gertie Westbrooke is, and maybe speak to me on the ship."

Gertie was much interested in the beautiful lady, whom she had occasionally seen from the window when Edith came to call upon Mrs. Barrett, and her interest was increased when she heard she was to be married to a gentleman rich enough and grand enough to be a lord, and that she was to see the sight, and then go to America in the same vessel with the bridal pair.

It was all like a bit of romance, and the little girl's heart beat high, and her cheeks were like carnation, as she arranged her bright hair and twisted a blue ribbon in it, and put on her best muslin dress, and the string of pearl beads a lady had given her at the last Christmas, and then went with Mary to the church, where, with her face all flushed and eager, she stood with her dimpled white arms leaning on the pew railing, her straw hat falling back from her head, and her sparkling blue eyes fixed upon the bridal party as it came up the aisle.

"Look, Bob! there's the very face I told you about, over

there in the corner!" Godfrey whispered to Robert Macpherson, with a pinch of the arm, which made Bob wince with pain.

But he saw the face, and started suddenly,—it was so like another dear little face lying under the daisies in the English sunshine. The same blue eyes, the same sweet mouth, the same bright, flowing hair he had tried so hard to put upon the canvas, and failed each time he tried, because of the treacherous memory, which, good in other things, could not retain with vividness the image of the lost one, loved so passionately and laid away from sight amid so many tears and heart-throbs.

"The likeness is wonderful," he thought. "I must ascertain who this child is. Schuyler will find her for me."

The ceremony was commencing now, and all eyes were fixed upon the bride, save those of Robert Macpherson. He looked only at Gertie Westbrooke, who, unconscious of his gaze, stood watching Edith in silent wonder and admiration, thinking how beautiful she was in her rich bridal robes, and how happy she must be,—only the bridegroom was a trifle too old, and dignified, and grave, Gertie thought; and then, as she glanced at the tall, handsome Godfrey, she thought if she were the bride she should prefer him to the father, and she wondered a little at Edith's choice.

"I require and charge you both that if either of you know any impediment why ye may not be lawfully joined together, ye do now confess it. For be ye well assured that if any persons are joined together otherwise than as God's word doth allow, their marriage is not lawful."

The clergyman uttered these words with great solemnity, and by mere chance, looked full at Edith, who involuntarily raised her eyes, and felt glad that there was nothing unconfessed on her part. Had there been, she must have shrieked it out even then at the last moment. But Col. Schuyler knew all about that grave at Schuyler Hill; all about the baby girl who died, and liked her just the same. There was no reason on her part why she should not be his wife, and she met the clergyman's eyes frankly, and felt a thrill of joy and peace even while she wondered if the bridegroom thought of that other bridal, when

Abelard Lyle stood beside her in Mr. Calvert's parlor, with Emily looking on. And Godfrey had been there too, his first experience of a wedding, perhaps. Had he ever thought of it since? Would his father ever tell him who the boy-husband was, who the childish bride? Probably not, and it was just as well. Godfrey had no concern in her past; only the father was interested, and if he was satisfied, that was sufficient. Thus Edith reasoned to herself, and saw the broad band of gold upon her finger, and felt the pressure of her hand which the colonel gave her, and knew that he was glad because of her, and when it all was over she left the altar as happy as half the brides who embark upon the sea of matrimony, with the uncertain future before them.

As she turned and passed near Gertie, a bouquet fell at her feet, and the face of the child who threw it was something wonderful to look at as she watched to see if her gift would be observed and accepted. It was, for Godfrey and Robert both sprang forward to get it, but Godfrey was the one who picked it up, and turning toward Gertie, he pressed it to his lips, and then, with a sign which Gertie understood, indicated that the bride should have it.

"Oh, wasn't it nice, though!" Gertie said, when she was home again, and talking of the event. "Such a sweet, beautiful lady, only I thought her face was kind of sorry, and Col. Schuyler was a great deal too old. I'd rather have the son, Mr. Godfrey, you call him. His face is smooth and handsome, and his eyes so full of fun. He is the one who looked at me so in the cab at Mrs. Barrett's, and he stared at me to-day, and kissed my flowers. I like Godfrey Schuyler ever so much. Do you believe I'll see him in America?"

Mrs. Rogers had listened with a good deal of interest to Gertie's remarks about the wedding, but when she came to Godfrey, and began to speculate upon the probability of seeing him in America, a shadow flitted across her face, and she said: "Gertie, listen a moment. You probably will see Mr. Godfrey Schuyler in America, and perhaps on shipboard, and if he noticed you in the cab and at church, as you say he did, he may try to

talk to you, but you are not to encourage him. Gentlemen's sons do not talk to girls like you for any good."

Gertie lifted her great blue eyes to her auntie's face a moment, and then, casting them down, seemed to be thinking for a time, when she said, suddenly :

"Auntie, wasn't my mother a lady, and wasn't my old home almost as big and pretty as Oakwood?"

"Yes," was the reply ; and Gertie continued :

"Then why should not a gentleman's son talk to me for good?"

"I cannot explain to you now, only seeing you with me, and knowing you are my adopted child, they would naturally place you in my rank ; do you understand?" Mrs. Rogers said ; and Gertie replied :

"Yes, but I could tell them;" then after a moment she added : "Auntie, who can I talk to? You said those children at the farmhouse were not good enough for me to associate with, and that people like Mr. Godfrey are too good."

It was a puzzling question, which Mary Rogers could not answer satisfactorily. She had carefully guarded her beautiful child from all contact with children of her own rank, and as she could not hope to find friends in the higher circles, Gertie had led a secluded life and knew very little of young people, and what they did and said. In one sense this made her old, and in other respects she was much more a child than a girl of twelve should be. But the latter character suited Mary, who wished she might keep her darling always as she was now, her very own, with no other love or interest between them. The thought of Godfrey Schuyler jarred upon her painfully, as if through him mischief might come to her pet, and so she raised a note of warning, which Gertie pondered upon the remainder of the day, wondering if she should see him on the ship, and if he would speak to her, and what she should say if he did, and who the man was who parted his hair in the middle, and stared at her quite as hard as Godfrey did, only in a different way, and wondered what her aunt would say if she knew she had given an old photograph of herself to Abel Browning, the freckled boy at

the farmhouse, who cried when she came away, and told her "she was the 'andsomest girl he had ever saw."

"I just wish I was one thing or the other," the little girl said to herself. "It is real mean to be too good to play with Abel and Bettie Browning, and not good enough to be talked to and looked at by Mr. Godfrey Schuyler."

CHAPTER XVIII.

AT OAKWOOD AFTER THE BRIDAL.

HE wedding breakfast was over, and Edith was in her room with her maid, Norah Long, and her mother, dressing for the short trip she was to make into the country before embarking for her new home.

There were many beautiful bouquets on her table, and Norah was to keep them for her till she returned, especially the one thrown at her feet by Gertie Westbrooke. Godfrey had brought this to her and told her whence it came, and she had found the slip of paper hidden in it, and read, "From little Gertie Westbrooke, with her love, and God bless you."

She had received costly gifts that day, but with none had there come a "God bless you," save with this tiny bouquet, and as she placed it herself in water, she whispered: "I do believe it's the only blessing I have had. I'll find the child when I come back, and thank her for it."

She was dressed at last in her handsome black silk, with her jaunty round hat and feather, which made her look so young and girlish, and then turning to Norah she bade her leave the room, as she wished to be alone with her mother for a few moments.

"Mother," she said, when the door had closed on Norah, "Col. Schuyler is so kind and generous, he has told me to ask him anything to-day, and he will grant it; and so I have concluded just for once to bring up the past and ask him if, before leaving England, I may find where baby was buried, and order

her a grave-stone. You can attend to it, you know, and I shall feel that everything has been done which I ought to do. What do you think of it?"

She was buttoning her gloves as she turned toward her mother, but stopped suddenly, struck by the expression of the face which met her eyes, and which she knew meant so much.

"Do nothing of the kind. Are you crazy, girl? Never allude to the child, if you wish to be happy."

Mrs. Barrett spoke rapidly and excitedly; and with a nameless terror of some threatened danger, Edith asked:

"Why, mother? Why not mention the child to-day, when he said, ask what I pleased? Why must I not?"

"Because—because—" and Mrs. Barrett came close to her and whispered: "He don't know there was a child. I did not tell him that."

"Don't know there was a child!" Edith repeated. "What do you mean? I wrote it in the letter,—all, everything; if he read it he knows about my baby. Moth——! Moth——!"

She could not say the whole name,—could not articulate another word, for the awful suspicion which flashed upon her, bringing back the hand which clutched her in a death-like grasp, and made her writhe and gasp for breath.

"Edith, listen to me;" and Mrs. Barrett spoke sternly. "It is time this folly ended. Do you think I would let you throw away the chance for which I had waited so long? Had Colonel Schuyler known the truth as you wrote it, he would not have married you, and as your mother it was my duty to interfere and save you from the consequences of your rashness. I kept your letter, and told him what I liked. I said you were in love when very young,—scarcely fifteen,—that the object of your love was greatly your inferior, and that I opposed the affair—that in spite of all you were secretly engaged, and would have been married, no doubt, had he not been suddenly killed. I told him, too, that the manner of his death was a fearful shock to your nerves, from which you had not yet recovered, as you now sometimes felt a choking sensation in your throat when

reminded of the past, and asked him never to refer to it if he wished to spare you pain. He promised he would not. He did not ask the name of the young man, nor where he lived ; indeed, he was not at all anxious to discuss the matter, and stopped me before I was quite done by telling me he had heard enough, and that he was satisfied. I think, however, he was annoyed, and you can judge what would have been the result had I given him your letter. Believe me, I acted for the best, and though you can now tell him, if you like, I trust you have too much good sense to do so, or at least will take time to consider. You are his wife ; nothing can alter that, and the past cannot in any way affect him, provided he knows nothing of it. To tell him now would be to wound him cruelly, and my advice to you is to let the matter rest, and take the good offered to you."

Edith made no reply. Indeed, she could not have spoken to have saved her life for the choking, palpitating sensation in her throat, where her heart seemed beating wildly with such throbs of pain as she had never felt before. Gradually as her mother talked she had sank down upon the couch where she lay in a crumpled heap, her face as white as ashes, and her eyes staring wildly like the eyes of one choking to death. And when at last she spoke, it was only in a whisper that she said :

" Oh, mother, you make me wish I was dead."

There was the sound of wheels upon the gravelled road, and Col. Schuyler's voice at the door, saying the carriage was waiting.

" Let it wait ; I cannot go now," Edith gasped, trying in vain to struggle to her feet, and then falling back among the cushions, weak and powerless to help herself.

Opening the door Mrs. Barrett bade Col. Schuyler enter, and then closing it again drew him quickly into the little dressing-room before he caught sight of Edith lying so still and helpless in her misery.

" I am sorry, but I suppose she cannot help it," she began, " she is so weak and nervous ; but something I said to her of that early affair, you know, has affected Edith so much as almos-

to bring on a faint, and she is there on the sofa, unable to sit up. Be very gentle with her, do. It is all my fault."

For a man to be told that his two hours' bride has fainted because reminded of a former love affair, is not very pleasant, and Col. Schuyler grew hot and cold, and a little annoyed. But he had known all the time that Edith's love in its full extent was yet to be won, and so the humiliation was not nearly so hard, and his voice was very tender and kind as he bent over her, and said :

"Edith, my darling, it distresses me to see you thus. I had thought,—I had hoped,—Edith, you are not sorry you are my wife, when I am so glad?"

There was something pleading in his tone, and it roused Edith, and sitting up, she said :

"No, Col. Schuyler, I am not sorry, and Heaven helping me, I'll be a good, true wife to you, but oh—oh—you must—bear with me, and if I am not all, or what you believe me to be, forgive me, will you? I am not to blame."

He did not in the least know what she meant, nor did he care. She was excited and nervous, he thought, and he tried to comfort and soothe her, and laid her head on his shoulder and held her closely to him, and told her to calm herself, and motioned Mrs. Barrett away with a gesture of impatience, and when Godfrey came to the door, and said, "Hurry up, or you'll be late," he answered back, "Send the carriage away. We will take the next train. Mrs. Schuyler is suddenly ill and cannot go just yet."

He had called her Mrs. Schuyler, she was his wife, and a feeling of reassurance and quiet began to steal over Edith as she sat with her head on her husband's shoulder and his arm around her waist, and with this feeling came a sensation akin to love for the man who was so kind to her and who had been so deceived. But not by her; she was not to blame, and she meant to tell him all, but not then. It was neither the time nor the place. It should be when they were away alone, before the day was over, and then if he chose to put her from him, and go back without her, he could do so, and she would say it was right.

She grew better rapidly after this decision was reached, and though her face was very pale, and there was a frightened look in her eyes, she met her friends at last with a smile, and gave some laughing excuse for her sudden faintness,—said the day was warm,—that she had not been well or slept much for weeks,—that she was subject to such attacks, but thought it most unfortunate that she should have one that day of all others.

She was much better when the time for the next train drew near, but there was a steady avoidance of her mother, who had deceived her so,—a coldness of manner which Mrs. Barrett felt but did not mind. So long as her end was obtained she was not scrupulous as to the means. She loved her daughter in her way, and now that she was Mrs. Howard Schuyler she would like to make much of her and be made much of in return, but if Edith was foolish enough to resent the means she had used to place her where she was, she could not help it, and bore her punishment very meekly, and was not at all demonstrative when at last her daughter said good-by to her just as she said it to the others and took her seat in the carriage.

Col. Schuyler noticed the formal leave-taking, and though he was better pleased to have it thus than he would have been had there been kissing and crying over the woman he secretly disliked and distrusted, he was a little surprised, and wondered if it were a feeling of pride born of her elevation which had so soon affected Edith.

Alas, he little understood her or dreamed of the conflict going on in her mind as she was borne rapidly along the road, through the beautiful English country, to the place where they were to spend the night and where Edith meant to tell him all.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BRIDAL DAYS.

DINNER was over in the house where they had stopped for the night, and drawing his chair near to the open window of their little parlor, Col. Schuyler sat down to enjoy the sweet summer air, as it came stealing in laden with the perfume of flowers and the freshly-cut hay upon the lawn of the castle near by. Edith was in the dressing-room adjoining, pretending to arrange her hair, but in reality trying to make up her mind how to begin the story she must tell. And how would he receive it? Would he spurn her at once, or, rather than let the world know of his disgrace, would he keep her with him, a wife merely in name, whom he never could love or respect?

"Oh, Father in Heaven," she whispered, "you know I am not to blame in this; help me to tell him, and incline him to receive it aright."

Strengthened by this prayer for aid, she gave herself no time, for further hesitation, but going swiftly to her husband's side she laid her hand on his shoulder in an appealing kind of way and said to him, softly:

"Colonel Schuyler!"

During the few hours in which the colonel had had Edith all to himself and felt that she really was his own, he had almost fallen in love with her in sober earnest. Before that day he had greatly admired and liked and respected and desired her, but something in the actual possession of her had stirred a deeper feeling in his heart than mere pride in her personal attractions, and when he felt the touch of her hand and heard the sound of her voice, a great throb of delight thrilled through his veins, and drawing her to him he made her sit upon his knee, and smoothing her cheek caressingly, said to her:

"Don't call me Colonel Schuyler, please. I'd rather be Howard to you, now that you are my wife. It will seem to lessen the years between us, and I do not want to be so much

older than my darling. Call me Howard now, and let me hear how it sounds."

"Not yet," Edith said; "not till I have told you something which should have been told before, and which may make a difference."

She spoke slowly and painfully, and Colonel Schuyler detected signs of choking in her voice, and guessing at once that she was thinking of the early lover, said to her, very kindly but firmly:

"Don't, Edith, please; don't tell me anything which will distress you. I do not wish to hear it. Your mother told me enough,—all I care to know,—and I am satisfied."

"But, Howard,"—she called him thus involuntarily, and there was a world of pathos and pitiful entreaty in her voice, while the eyes she fixed upon him were swimming in tears—"but, Howard, mother did not tell you the whole——"

"Then you need not," he answered, quickly. "If you are pure, and good, and true, that is all I ask, and I know you are all of these. I daresay your mother did not tell me as eloquently as you could have told me how much you loved that man, and how your heart ached for him; and you wish me to know it all, but I am satisfied. You are my wife, and nothing can make any difference, even if you were his widow, instead of his affianced, though widows are not to my taste. I am satisfied, and to prove that I am, I do not even care to know his name or where he lived. In fact, I would rather not know it, would rather you should never refer to it again, for it is not a pleasant topic; and now for the favor you were to ask me on our wedding-day, and which I was to grant even to half my kingdom."

He spoke playfully and held her closer to him while the hot tears poured over Edith's face. What should she do? Should she tell him in spite of his protest and his assurance that he was satisfied? She could not with the memory of his words, "Widows are not to my taste," still ringing in her ears, and so she let the opportunity pass, and the only favor she asked was that whatever might come in the future he would have faith in her and believe that she meant to do right.

"Of course I will, you foolish little girl. You are nervous and tired to-night," he said ; and then, as if struck with a sudden thought, he added : " Only tell me one thing,—if that young man had lived and not improved beyond what he was when you knew him, and you had grown to be what you are, could you have loved him now as you did then ? "

" Perhaps not. I never thought of it in that light," Edith said ; and her husband continued :

" One question more. Do you believe you can in time love me as well as you did him ? "

" Yes, Howard, I know I can," Edith spoke quickly, and her arms wound themselves involuntarily around her husband's neck, while for the first time she kissed him unsolicited.

" Then, my darling," he responded, " there is nothing before us but happiness, if God so wills it, and may He deal by me as I do by you, my precious wife."

He was growing to love her so fast, and Edith knew it, and felt her misery giving way, and her heart grew light again as it had been when she fancied he knew the whole.

Edith had known from the first that it was the colonel's plan to visit Alnwick and go over the grand old castle which at this season of the year was open to visitors, and she did not oppose him, though the neighborhood of Alnwick was fraught with sad memories for her as having been Abelard's home. His friends were still living there, she knew from Godfrey, and the first night at the inn where they took rooms was passed in wakefulness, with a feeling of oppression and sadness which she could not shake off. Abelard had told her so much of Alnwick and the castle, and had talked of the time when she would visit it with him ; and now, he was dead, and she was there, the wife of another man, with that great secret weighing her down at times and casting a shadow on everything. How she wished she might see his home and the old mother he used to talk of so fondly, and yet when her husband said to her one morning : " Edith, I am going to call on some poor people who live about two miles from here. Perhaps you will like to go with me when I tell you who they are," she trembled and grew cold, and

scarcely heard a word of the story he told her, and which she knew so much better than he did. "I called upon them last summer," he said, "when Godfrey was with me, and it is not necessary that I should go again, but I know it will please them, and I am so happy myself that I feel like conferring happiness on others. Will you go, darling? They will feel honored if I bring them my young bride."

"Oh, Howard, no! Please don't ask me. I'd so much rather not," Edith cried, feeling how terrible it would be to go with her husband into the presence of Abelard's mother and hear her talk of him, as she assuredly would.

She could not do it, and she expressed herself so decidedly, that the colonel looked at her curiously while a cloud passed over his face; and, without meaning to do so, he seemed displeased and out of sorts. He was not accustomed to have his wishes thwarted, and he had set his heart upon taking his wife with him when he visited the Lyles, and after he had told her of his indebtedness to them, he thought she ought to go out of deference to his wishes. Surely it was not pride which prompted her unwillingness to call upon such people, for what business had she to be prouder than himself, he thought, and he seemed so moody and silent that Edith detected the change in his manner at once, and resolving to conquer her own personal feelings, went up to him and said:

"Howard, I have changed my mind; I will go with you if you wish it."

His face cleared as he said: "Thank you, darling, I am very glad, both because I like to have you with me, and because I know the attention will be sure to please those people. Did I tell you of the little boy to whom Godfrey gave his name, when we stopped there last year on our way to Oakwood? He is always doing such things; has two or three namesakes at home, a thing of which I do not altogether approve, but in the case of these Nesbits I could not oppose it. Shall we start at once? It is only two miles distant; will you walk or ride?"

Edith chose to walk, and they set off together across the fresh green fields, and through the quiet, shaded lanes toward

the low-thatched cottage where Abelard Lyle was born, and where his mother sat knitting by the door with a placid expression on her calm face, and the sunlight falling on her snowy hair. It would be impossible to describe Edith's emotions as she walked with her husband through the lanes, and fields, and woods where her boy-lover had so often been, and where he had thought some day to bring her and show her to his mother, and it seemed to her almost as if he was there, moving silently beside her, and once when a leaf rustled at her feet, she started with a nervous cry and clung close to her husband's arm. And yet it was not regret for the dead which thus affected her. Her life with Abelard was like a far-off dream to her now, a thing apart from herself and her present life, and had her husband known, she would not have felt as she did with that secret on her mind, making her breathe quickly, and grow faint and pale when at last the house was reached and she saw for the first time how humble and poor Abelard's home had been. Everything pertaining to it, however, was scrupulously neat, and the little grass-plot before the door showed frequent acquaintance with sickle or shears, while the old-fashioned flowers on the narrow border told of good taste in some one. But it was all so small and meagre and poor, and the calico dress of the old lady, knitting on the porch, was faded and patched, and the white kerchief pinned about her neck was darned in several places. She had a fair, sweet old face, with a resemblance to Abelard, Edith thought, when at the sound of their footsteps she looked up with a smile of welcome and inquiry. From having always lived near the border she spoke with a broad Scotch accent, which Edith did not comprehend at first. She was evidently greatly pleased and flattered that Col. Schuyler had come to see her again, and brought his bonny bride, whose hand she held in her own, and into whose face she gazed curiously as she bade her welcome, and led her into the house where Mrs. Nesbit, the daughter, sat with her sleeves rolled up combing her long black hair, with a bit of glass before her, and Godfrey Schuyler asleep in his rude cradle.

Mrs. Nesbit, or Jenny as she was called, was not naturally

as refined as her mother, and she kept on combing her hair without any apology, talking rapidly all the time, and saying what an honor she felt it to be for the likes of Col. Schuyler to visit the likes of them, though to be sure he owed them something for her poor brother's death. "You know about that, I s'pose," and she looked at Edith, whose dress she had been closely inspecting between each passage of the comb through her hair.

Edith nodded in token that she did know. She could not speak ; the room was so small and so close, and the iron fingers held her throat with so firm a clutch that she could only sit perfectly still and listen while the old story was told again by Colonel Schuyler, and the mother wept silently, ejaculating now and then, "Oh, my puir bairn, my puir bairn !"

Jenny did not cry. She was looking at the bride in her rich apparel, and thinking how proud she was to be so unmoved, as if it was nothing to her how many poor men lost their lives to save that of a Schuyler. And Colonel Schuyler too had similar thoughts with Jenny, and believed it was contempt for these people and their surroundings which kept Edith so silent, in spite of his efforts to draw her into the conversation and make her seem gracious and interested. Alas ! he could not guess what she was enduring as she sat there in Abelard's home, and heard them talking of him and all the incidents concerned with his death.

"You dinna ken my lad," the mother said to her ; "an' so you dinna ken how sair I was for him. Ah, he was a bonny lad and gude."

Edith nodded, and the old lady went on, now addressing the colonel :

"A maun who kenned my boy and see him kilt coomed here onc't an' tauld me about it, and said there was a young lass there who moight be Abel's sweetheart ; heard ye tell of her like ?"

No, the colonel had not heard of her, or he had forgotten, and as Edith was not supposed to know anything of the circumstances she was spared the questioning, and Mrs. Lyle went on

to say that if there was such a lass she'd like so much to know something of her.

"Mayhap," and she turned again to Edith; "mayhap you'll foind her some day, and if you do wool ye let me know?"

Had her life depended upon it Edith could not have spoken, and a nod was her only answer, while her cheeks burned scarlet and the perspiration gathered about her mouth. The colonel was angry, and rose to take leave, while Jenny, who was angry also at what she believed to be the lady's pride, began in a flippant way to say that, poor as they were, they had some grand relatives; her oldest sister, Dorothea, had married into one of the high Scotch families, where they kept twenty servants and dined at six o'clock.

"Hoity-toity, Jenny, my lass," said the mother, "what was the good o' that? Dinna them foine folk turn my Dolly and her maun out o' door and never spake to 'em till he died?"

"Yes, mother, but their boy got the money at last, and was here to see us a spell ago, lookin' as foine as any gentleman," Jenny said, and then having given the final twist to her hair, and seeing that their guests were really going, she woke the little Godfrey Schuyler, and took him proudly to Edith, who could and did kiss him; an act which made amends for much of her silence and seeming haughtiness of manner.

Had Edith followed out her impulse she would have kissed Abelard's mother, for the sake of the dead son, but after her persistent silence and reserve there could be no excuse for such a proceeding, and so she merely took the withered hand in her own and pressed it hard, managing to say "good-by," and then she passed through the low door, out into the sunshire, like one passing from prison walls into freedom again.

For a time the colonel was silent, and never spoke a word until they reached the border of the wood through which a path led to Alnwick; then, as Edith paused a moment and looked back at the thatched roof with the creeper climbing over it, he, too, looked back and said:

"I am glad my lot was not cast among such people; I cannot say they are to my taste, especially that garrulous Mrs. Nesbit,

with her fine comb and bare arms. The old lady is better, and has a good deal of natural refinement. I think our visit did her good ; such people are always pleased with attention from their betters, and it certainly does us no harm to give it. Edith, my dear——” He spoke a little sternly now, and his face was overcast. “I am sorry you chose to be so quiet and reserved. It would have pleased me better if you had made an effort to be more social with them, and I really owe them so much.”

“Oh, Howard, please forgive me. It was not pride which kept me silent. I wanted to talk, but could not,” Edith said, while the tears rained over her face.

He had made her cry, and he was sorry for it at once, and made her sit down beside him on a rude bench by the path, and said he was hasty and had expected too much from her, who could not of course sympathize with his interest in the Lyles. And Edith listened to him, and felt like a felon who is hiding his secret from the world. Why had she not told him that first day of married life with him ? Why had she not shrieked it in his ear and compelled him to hear it ? It had been easier then, sure, than it was now, when so much had happened to make it hard, if not impossible. Yes, impossible, she said to herself, as she remembered the bare arms and the fine comb and the talkative Mrs. Nesbit. She could not declare that woman to be her sister-in-law, and she forced the secret still further down into her heart, and when her husband bade her kiss him in token of forgiveness, she kissed him twice, and there was peace between them as they walked arm in arm through the leafy woods and grassy lanes back to their rooms at Alnwick.

But Edith's mind was not at rest. Thoughts of that white-haired, sweet-faced old lady, knitting in the sunshine, were constantly in her mind. She had been cold, almost rude to her, and she wished to make amends,—to leave, if possible, a good impression of herself in Abelard's old home,—to have his mother's blessing as a guaranty of happiness in the life before her, and as she lay awake many hours of the night, her thoughts gradually formed themselves into a plan she resolved to carry out.

Her husband had been invited to dine at the castle with a party of American gentlemen, who were about to introduce some farming implement to the agent of the estate, who acted as host on the occasion. As no ladies were included, Edith was to be left alone for several hours, and she determined to improve the opportunity for redressing any wrong she might have done to Mrs. Lyle.

It was twelve o'clock before her husband left her, and as soon as he was gone she donned her walking-dress, and set off for the cottage near the wood. Fortunately for her Mrs. Nesbit was out, but the old lady sat knitting again on the porch, with little Godfrey Schuyler playing near her on the floor. She recognized Edith, and seemed both glad and surprised to see her.

"I wanted to come again," Edith said, sitting down close beside the woman. "I was not feeling well when I was here yesterday, and I could not talk as I wished to do, but I did not mean it for coldness or pride. Colonel Schuyler is so grateful for what your son did for him, and I—I am interested in you, too,—more even than he can be, and if you like you may tell all about your boy who died in that dreadful manner."

There were tears in Edith's eyes, and her voice trembled as she spoke, while Mrs. Lyle stopped her knitting and looked curiously at her. She had thought her proud and haughty, and had felt a little hurt by her silence and reserve, while her daughter, in her coarser way, had not hesitated to call her *airy* and an upstart, wondering who she was to feel so much above them. That she was pretty, even Jenny conceded, while the mother thought her very beautiful and grand. "Fit to be a duchess," was her verdict now, when she saw her again so humble and sweet, apologizing for her reserve of the day before, and asking to hear about her poor dead boy. She liked to talk of him, and once launched upon the subject did not know when to stop, but talked on and on, narrating incidents of his babyhood, boyhood and early manhood, while Edith listened with hands clasped tightly together and a heart which beat almost audibly.

"And ye are goin' where he's buried," Mrs. Lyle said to

her. "And if ye want an old woman's blessin', maylike you'll keep his grave fresh and clean, and send me a posy from it some day."

"I will, I promise you I will, and if I can ever tell you about that girl who loved him, I will do so," Edith said vehemently; and then, impelled by an impulse she could not resist, she continued: "Mrs. Lyle, I want to ask you something which you'll please keep to yourself. You are old, and I am young; you are good, and I am not, but I want to be, so much. If there was something in your life which you supposed your husband knew, and which, after you were married, you found he did not know, though through no fault of yours, and if you felt almost sure that, had he known it, he would not have married you, and might think less of you now, would you consider it your duty to tell him?"

Edith gasped out the words and sat panting with excitement and agitation, while Mrs. Lyle considered for a moment, and then replied in the following words, which I render in good English:

"Is the something which he don't know a *sin*, a crime, a wrong to him, or anybody?"

"No, not a sin, or wrong, only a mistake," Edith replied; and the woman continued:

"Would the withholding it now do harm to any one?"

"No; on the contrary, the telling it might cause my husband to think less of me, and make us very unhappy."

"Then if you meant no wrong, and the telling it can do no good, and might do harm, and no one is interested but yourself, keep it to yourself," Mrs. Lyle said, while Edith felt herself growing light as air.

It was strange how much comfort she derived from Mrs. Lyle's advice, and how much confidence she felt in the judgment of this woman, whom she had seen but once before. It was almost as if absolution had been granted her for her sins, past, present, and to come, and no religious devotee ever felt lighter and freer after a full confession than Edith did for a few moments after hearing Mrs. Lyle's decision.

"Thank you, thank you," she said. "You have done me so

much good. I have been so miserable, and there was no one whom I could talk with about it. I shall not forget you, Mrs. Lyle, and sometimes I may perhaps write to you, and tell you of my home. And now I must go; but first, will you give me your blessing. I want it so much."

And kneeling before the old lady Edith bowed her beautiful head, while a hand was laid gently on her shining hair, and a trembling voice said reverently: "Will God bless and keep my bonny child and make her a gude and happy wife, an' gi'e her many bairns to comfort her auld age."

She was thinking of her Abelard who died, and Edith thought of him too, and there were tears in her eyes as she rose from her knees, and, kissing the white-haired woman who had done her so much good, went out from her presence with a happier, lighter heart than she had known for many a day.

It was all right, since Abelard's mother had said so and blessed her, and she could be happy now, and when her husband returned from the castle he met a very bright, beaming face at the door of his room, and his young wife's arms were round his neck, and his wife herself was on his knee when she told him that she had been again to see Mrs. Lyle, and made ample amends for all yesterday's reserve. She did not tell him of the advice or blessing, but she said:

"I know I left a good impression, and I promised to write to her some time and tell her of my home. She seems a very nice old lady."

Col. Schuyler kissed her glowing cheek and called her a conscientious little puss, and thought how very beautiful she was in her pretty evening dress, with the wild flowers in her hair, and felt himself the most fortunate man in England to possess so much youth and beauty.

A few days later found them again at Oakwood, where Godfrey met them at the station and saluted Edith as his "mamma," while his eyes danced with mischief and fun. He did not tell her of the letter of dismay which had come to him from home in answer to his own, wherein the charms of the new mother had been so graphically described. But he laughed to

himself every time he thought of it, and what they were prepared for, and then thought of the rare type of loveliness whom he teasingly called mam-ma, and to whom he was as attentive as if he had been her lover instead of her step-son. Robert Macpherson was still at Oakwood, and greatly to Godfrey's delight had decided upon going to America. "The very nicest chap in the world," Godfrey still continued to think him, in spite of the hair parted in the middle, and the night-shirts ruffled and buttoned behind.

"But something has come over the spirit of his dream," he said to Edith, when talking of him. "Ever since he came from visiting those friends of his he has fits of melancholy and acts a good deal like a man in love, but when I put it to him he denied it indignantly, and said no girl whom he would have would ever marry him, and then he went straight off to see the little Westbrooke who threw you that bouquet, you know. He is wonderfully struck with her, and wants to paint her portrait as a fancy piece, and call it '*La petite sœur*;' but that Rogers' dame guards her pet like an old she-dragon, and will not let Gertie sit on any account, even though I promised to be present at the sittings and see that fair play was done."

Edith smiled derisively, and felt that she did not blame Mrs. Rogers for objecting to Godfrey Schuyler, with his saucy eyes and teasing ways, as a protector for her child. The little girl was going out with them, Godfrey said, and maybe Bob could study her a little on the ship. He had made two or three sketches of her already, drawing from his memory, of course, but none of them quite suited him. He must have her sit to him, and he,—Godfrey,—thought it a shame for that Rogers' woman to be so much afraid of having her *protégée* looked at by such nice chaps as himself and Bob!

Edith had never fairly seen the child whom Robert Macpherson desired as a model for "*La Sœur*," but she felt a deep interest in her, both for the blessing sent on her bridal day, and because of the strong affection the child had inspired in Mrs. Barrett, who seemed to feel worse at the thought of parting with her than with Edith herself.

The first meeting between mother and daughter had been rather cool and constrained, for Edith had lost confidence in her parent's integrity, and could not help showing it. Still she was about to leave her, and at the last, when she went to say good-by, her manner softened greatly, for in spite of all it was her mother whom she kissed with many tears, and who herself broke down and cried, when the last farewell was said, and Edith went from her door forever. But Mrs. Barrett did not sob as pitifully then as when an hour later Gertie Westbrooke came and hung about her neck so lovingly, and said :

"I am sorry to leave you alone. I wish you would go to."

Edith had not said that ; Edith did not wish it, and Mrs. Barrett knew why, but it hurt her none the less, and Gertie's fond regrets and words of love were very dear to her.

"I shall never forget you, never ; and, maybe, if I am ever married, you shall live with me, and be my grandma," Gertie said, with a dim perception that her friend's heart was sore with a longing to go with her daughter, who did not want her ; and then Mrs. Barrett sobbed aloud, and held the girl close to her bosom, and said :

"I never thought I could love a child as I love you, little Gertie. I am a hard, wicked woman, no doubt, but I want you to be good, and surely I may pray for that. God bless you, Gertie, and make your life as happy as you are sweet and pure. Good-by."

She put the child gently from her, and went quickly into her own room, where she could be alone, and I am almost certain that the parting with her daughter did not hurt her half as much as the parting with Gertie Westbrooke.

CHAPTER XX.

ON THE SEA.

THEY had been at sea three days, and Edith in her warm wraps and pretty hood was sitting on deck in the large easy-chair her husband had bought in Liverpool for this purpose. Every comfort which ingenuity could devise and money pay for he had procured for her in order to make the voyage bearable. One of the largest, most commodious staterooms was hers, so that she need not feel too much confined, and when all this did not avail to avert the evils of sea-sickness, he and Norah nursed her assiduously, until she was able to be lifted in his arms and carried upon deck, where, with the fresh breeze blowing in her face, she felt her strength coming back, and thoroughly enjoyed the blue expanse of sky above, and the deep, dark waters beneath, which now were smooth and quiet as a river. The colonel was never sick, and walked the planks from first to last as firmly and steadily as a general at the head of his troops; but alas for poor Godfrey. During the voyage out he had been perfectly well, even in a storm, and boasted much of his ability to keep so.

"You have only to exercise your will and you are well enough," he said, with a certain sniff of contempt for the weaker ones who are never seen from port to port. "Pluck is all you need to keep you straight, even when chairs and tables and shovel and tongs are dancing a cotillon, and raising Ned generally."

This was Godfrey's opinion, when in his clean, light summer suit he stepped airily on board and gave his hand to Bob Macpherson, even then growing pale about the lips and unsteady in his feet. But when they had been out a few hours, and a great lurch came, and the waves broke over the deck, and splashed Godfrey's clean pants, and dashed the salt spray in his face, he, too, began to turn white, and feel, as he expressed it, as if the ends of his toes were coming up through his stomach

to pay his throat a visit, and when the toes reached there and showed signs of going still further, the young man succumbed to his fate, and suddenly disappearing from view, went headlong into the room where poor Bob had lain from the first, caring little whether his perfumed hair was parted in the middle or not, or his elaborate night-shirt buttoned before or behind. Personal appearance was nothing in that stateroom where the two young men lay, one in the upper, one in the under berth, and both too sick for more exertion than to groan, when a swell, heavier than usual, sent them rolling on the floor. Regularly each morning *Dan* went in to see how it fared with them, offering chicken-broth and coffee, and bidding them "keep up their courage and have a little pluck ; it was nothing to what it would be."

To these consolatory remarks Bob offered no response. He was too nearly crushed to speak, and afraid, withal, to do so, as the least movement raised a tornado in his stomach ; but Godfrey was more demonstrative, and having plunged into bed in his boots, which he had succeeded in getting off and had beside him, he hurled one at the head of poor Dan, who adroitly dodged it and then graciously adjusted the spittoon, knowing it would be needed after such exertion. And it was !

"Talk to me of pluck !" Godfrey said, between the upheavings which nearly burst his throat ; "I believe my soul I'm throwing mine up !" and then he lay back upon his pillow, white, quivering and subdued, and took a swallow of the broth and declared it was made of dishwater, and bade Dan clear out and never show himself there again.

Regularly, twice each day, the colonel visited his son, and made set speeches to him, and bade him try to dress himself and get on deck, where the air would soon restore him.

"Mrs. Schuyler is there, and nearly well, and she was as bad as you, and worse, for she could not flounce as you do. A little effort of the will is all that is necessary to set you on your legs."

Unconsciously, he was quoting Godfrey's own words, and poor Bob ventured a little chuckle, which he paid for afterward,

while Godfrey wished there was no such commandment as the third, so that he might free his mind for once.

And how, these days, had it fared with little Gertie, the second-class passenger, whose state-room was small and close and hot, for the window had been closed and fastened since the water came in with a dash and wet the little hard bed. Poor Gertie, how the ship tumbled and rolled and tossed, and how she tossed and rolled and tumbled with it, and clutched at everything in her reach, with a feeling that they were tipping over and she was standing on her head. And how the cold, clammy sweat stood on her face and hands, and the dreadful, death-like faintness crept from her feet through every nerve, as, with fearful contortions, her stomach tried in vain to relieve itself, and she fell back, panting and helpless, upon the hard, scant pillow. It was horrible, and the poor child wished so much that she could die, or that the ship would stop for just one minute, and give her time to breathe, even though it were the fetid air, which almost stifled her and made her long so for the hedge-rows and fields of dear old England, now so far away. But Gertie did not die, and the vessel did not stop, and the window was not opened. She was merely second-class, and it was not worth one's while to open and shut windows just for her; and though Mary Rogers did all she could for her sick child, and brought her many things to tempt her appetite, Gertie turned from them all, and sobbed piteously, "I am so sick,—shall we ever get there? Is everybody sick, and are all the rooms as close and hot and small? Where is the pretty lady, Mrs. Schuyler? I wish she'd come and see me. I think I should be better. Would you dare ask her?"

Mrs. Rogers did not know whether she dared or not. She would see, she said, and when that afternoon she saw Edith on deck, she ventured upon some trivial remark as the cousin of Norah, and finally spoke of her little girl, who was suffering so much.

"Oh yes; Gertie Westbrooke. I remember now. She was to go with us; and you are Mrs. Rogers, Norah's cousin, and the little girl is very sick and uncomfortable; I am so sorry

for her. I know just how it feels. Can I do anything for her?"

Mary hesitated and then said:

"She has felt interested in you since the day you were married. She was there."

"Yes, and threw me the pretty bouquet," Edith said; and Mary continued:

"She talks a great deal of you, and thinks now if you could come and see her it would do her good; but, ma'am, I told her how it wasn't likely you would or could do that. Our room is very small and close, and the pillows are so hard and poor."

"I do not believe I can go now; I am hardly strong enough," Edith said; "but I will come some day if she does not get well; and now carry her this soft shawl; it will answer for a pillow. I do not need it at all, and Norah shall take her some oranges and wine."

Mary demurred at the shawl, but Edith insisted, and remembered the oranges and wine, which so refreshed the child that she slept soundly that night with Edith's shawl for a pillow, and a dream of Edith in her heart.

The next day she was better, and Mary took the shawl back to Edith, who was again on deck, with her husband standing beside her.

"Poor thing," Edith said, kindly; "I am glad she is better. Tell her I'll come and see her when I can, and as soon as she is able to be moved I'll have her brought up to my stateroom for a while; it must be dreadful there with the windows shut and the air so close and confined."

She glanced at her husband, whose face was overcast.

"Who is this woman and who is the child you propose moving into our stateroom?" he asked, stiffly, when Mary was gone; and Edith replied by telling him what she knew of Ger-
tie Westbrooke and her mother.

Colonel Schuyler could reproach Edith for seeming cold and proud toward the Lyles, to whom he felt that he owed something, but he was far from wishing her to treat people like

Mary Rogers with any show of familiarity. There his pride came in strongly, and he said to her at once :

"You can send the child any delicacy you choose, and I will see that her window is opened so she can have air, but she must not be brought to our stateroom ; and if she slept on your shawl, as it seems she did, I desire you to give it to her altogether. You surely will never wear it again. Norah ?"

And he turned to their maid, who stood near :

"Take this shawl to your cousin's child and tell her Mrs. Schuyler sent it, and wishes her to keep it."

Norah looked wonderingly at him, while Edith blushed painfully, but neither said a word, and after Norah was gone with the shawl Colonel Schuyler continued : "I do not wish to distress you, my dear, or to interfere with your actions unnecessarily, but I think it just as well not to have too much to do with the lower class unless, as in the case of the Lyles, we are under obligations to them. And as this Rogers child is nothing to us, you are not called upon to visit her. She will soon recover. Such people always do. I'll go now and speak about the window."

He felt uncomfortable and wished to get away, for he did not quite like the grieved look in Edith's eyes, or the pained expression of her face. Edith herself could not tell why his words hurt her as they did, or why she felt so interested in the sick girl whom she had as yet never seen distinctly. But she was interested in her, and though she did not visit her as she had intended doing, she sent her many delicacies and a pillow from her stateroom, and felt almost as much pleased as Mary Rogers herself when she heard at last that she was better.

Gertie had been very sick, and her bright color was all gone, and her round cheeks looked thin and wan, when at last Mary dressed her in her warm wrapper, with its facings of pink, and then folding Edith's shawl about her carried her on deck, and propping her up with pillows and cushions made her as comfortable as she could.

Though pale and worn with marks of suffering on her face and in her soft blue eyes, Gertie was pretty still, and made a

very attractive picture as she sat in her quiet corner with a book, whose pages she was turning listlessly, when she heard footsteps approaching her, and a voice exclaimed :

"Hallo, Bob, by George, if there isn't '*La Sœur*,' looking like a little ghost ; here, this way ,'" and Godfrey Schuyler, who was also better and able to be up, came quickly to her side, followed by Robert Macpherson, who moved more slowly and showed more signs of weakness than the active, restless Godfrey.

Robert Macpherson had seen and talked with Gertie at her lodgings near Oakwood, and had asked her to sit for her picture, and she had said she would, and a day had been appointed for the sitting, when Mary Rogers interfered and refused *in toto*, and kept her child so close that neither Robert nor Godfrey saw her again except in her aunt's company or through the window of her room.

Godfrey, indeed, had only spoken to her once, and that when she sat in the door eating blackberries, her lips and pretty fingers stained with the juice, and her bright hair falling about her face. Mrs. Rogers had come upon him then just as he was going to make some flattering speech, and called her little girl away, and he had not seen her since until now, when he esteemed it a great piece of luck to stumble thus upon her with the dragon out of sight. Gertie knew him, and a pleased smile broke over her face and shone in her eyes, when he stopped before her and asked if she had been sick and how she liked the feeling of it. She did not like it at all, and she and Godfrey grew very social and sympathetic as they compared notes, he going far ahead of her, of course, inasmuch as he did not hesitate to draw upon his imagination when necessary, while she adhered strictly to the truth, saying only that she felt at times as if she were standing on her head, while he averred that he did stand on his head until he was black in the face. She did not believe him, but she laughed merrily at his droll sayings, and their acquaintance was progressing rapidly when he asked what she was reading, and stooped down beside her to see the title-page.

Godfrey was very fond of little girls, and this one had interested him greatly from the time he first saw her in the cab on

Caledonia Street, and now as he bent his face so close to hers that his brown curls touched her auburn hair, he could not resist the temptation, but snatched a kiss from her lips ere she was aware of his intention. Though small of stature Gertie was twelve years old, and very womanly in some respects, and at this liberty all her instincts of modesty and propriety awoke within her, and while the hot tears glittered in her eyes, which flashed angrily upon the offender, she said :

"You stop! You mustn't! You shan't! You have no business to kiss me, Mr. Godfrey, and I am very indignant!"

She wiped her lips two or three times, while Godfrey, who considered it a good joke, and was vastly amused at her rage, said to her :

"Why oughtn't I to kiss a pretty girl like you when I find her all alone?"

"Because I am alone," Gertie replied, with a very wise shake of the head. "Because men like you shouldn't kiss girls like me whom they don't like."

"But I do like you immensely," Godfrey said, "and think you the prettiest girl I ever saw."

"Hush!" Gertie rejoined, with all the dignity of a woman of twenty. "You shall not talk to me like that, and you wouldn't either if I was somebody else."

"Who, for instance?" Godfrey asked, and looking him steadily in the face, with her clear, honest eyes, Gertie said :

"Mr. Godfrey, if I were one of your sisters would you have done it?"

"Certainly, I have a right to kiss my sister," Godfrey said, and Gertie continued :

"I don't mean that. I mean if you were somebody else and I was one of your sisters."

"Still wrong," Godfrey said, "for even if I were somebody else and you my sister I would kiss you many times."

He would not understand, and Gertie glanced appealingly at Robert Macpherson, who had been listening languidly, while with an artist's interest he attentively studied the little face

which so puzzled and attracted him. As he met her glance he came a step nearer to her, and said :

"Let me tell you how to put it. Suppose you are my sister ?"

"You are a gentleman born ?" Gertie asked, while the young man colored to the roots of his hair, and answered :

"I believe I am."

"Well, then," and she turned again to Godfrey, "suppose I was his sister and you were yourself, and you found me a sick, tired little girl, sitting by myself, would you have dared to kiss me then ?"

There was in her manner so much sweetness and dignity withal that languid Bob roused in her behalf, and said :

"If he did I'd knock him down," while Godfrey, wholly driven to bay, answered humbly :

"No, Miss Gertie, I would not, and I beg your pardon, and assure you I meant no harm, but really you looked so pretty, so *piquante*——"

"You must not tell me that either," Gertie said. "I'm glad if you think me pretty, and glad to have you like me, but you mustn't tell me so. It's very bad, for Auntie Rogers says young men like you never talk to girls like me for good, and I must not let you."

"What kind of a girl are you, pray ?" Godfrey asked, feeling more and more amused and interested with this quaint little creature, who replied :

"I am poor, and have not any relatives except a grandmother, and I don't know where she is. But my mother was a lady, auntie says, and I once lived in a big house with servants, and auntie was my nurse. I don't know where it was or why I left it when mother died. Auntie does not tell me, and she is so kind, and I have forty pounds a year of my own, and maybe I shall learn a trade, or teach school in America, and some time marry respectably, but I'm not the kind of girl for a man like you to kiss and talk to."

"Gertie, you are a brick !" came emphatically from the amused Godfrey, who felt a great desire to kiss the full lips again in his admiration of the child.

But he dared not do it. Indeed, there was something about her which inspired him with a respect such as he had never before felt for a girl, and as he told Robert Macpherson in confidence, he wanted to crawl into his boots when, after his assertion that she was a brick, she lifted her eyes so wonderingly, and said :

"I'm a what?"

"A brick," he answered ; "don't you know what that is?"

"Yes, I know it in its place ; but I don't know what you mean when you give the name to me. Nothing bad, I hope."

"Certainly not ; it's a compliment. I called you so because I like you and think you smart,—clever, you English would say, I suppose."

And Godfrey began to shake down his pants, and stand first on one foot and then upon the other, in his perplexity how to appear well in the mind of this little girl, who was so young, and innocent, and honest, and yet so old in some things.

"That's slang, isn't it?" Gertie asked.

And he replied :

"Yes, I suppose it would be called so, but it is very expressive. Don't you like slang?"

"No, I do not, and I don't see why nice people like you should use it so much."

"Do I use it so much?" Godfrey asked.

And the girl replied :

"I heard you once at Oakwood, when you did not know I was there in the kitchen, say 'by George,' and 'by Jove,' three times right along, and you called your father the 'governor,' and one of the maids said she supposed it was Yankee slang."

Godfrey's face was scarlet at this reproof, which he knew he merited, and for a moment he did not know what to say. Soon rallying, however, he said, good-naturedly :

"I guess I am rather given to slang,—the girls at home nag me about it all the time, and I do it to tease them ; but I'll quit it now, by Jo—I beg your pardon. I did not know I was so given to it, and I will reform, by George ! There ! that was to finish up."

And Godfrey laughed heartily at himself, while Gertie, too, joined in the laugh, and thought how handsome he was, and what white, even teeth he had, and hoped he was not angry with her. So when he said to her next: "Gertie, if I really try to reform and quit my slang, will you promise to like me a little?" she answered quickly: "Yes, and I like you now,—some, you know,—though I did not like you to stare at me so when I was in the cab at Mrs. Barrett's gate; but when I saw you in church at the wedding, I thought you very nice, and kept on thinking so until you kissed me, when I was very angry; but I'm over it now, and you'll never kiss me again."

That was a fixed fact in her mind, but Godfrey was not so sure of it, and he said to her seriously:

"Gertie, I am sure you are very good and generous, and I really mean to reform, and I want you to promise me one thing. You are going to Hampstead, I believe?"

Yes, Gertie supposed she was, "but," she added, "I shall not see you, of course."

"Why not?" he asked, and she replied:

"Why, don't you know? You are rich and we are poor. You live in the great house, and we are your tenants; that is, I believe auntie is to rent a cottage of your father, if it is not too high. We cannot give much, for auntie lost her shares in the bank last summer, and now she must do fluting and clear-starching and sewing for our living, as she will not touch my forty pounds; that she says is for my education, and I do so want to learn music. We can live on most nothing, only the rent takes money. Will it be very much?"

"No, not much," Godfrey replied, a sudden thought flashing into his mind upon which he resolved to act, but not till he had made his compact with Gertie.

"You did not let me finish," he said; "I want to make a bargain with you, which is this: I am to reform, and you are to tell me from time to time if I am improving, and when you really think I am a perfect gentleman, you are to let me kiss you again. Is it a fair bargain?"

Gertie considered a moment, and then said, with the utmost gravity :

"Ye-es,—I don't believe there would be any harm in it, inas much as you did it for pay."

"Then it is a bargain, and I begin from this minute to be a gentleman," Godfrey cried, but his zeal was a little dampened by Gertie's next remark.

"It may be a long time, Mr. Godfrey, and I'll be grown up, and then it would not be proper at all."

Here Robert Macpherson burst into a loud laugh and exclaimed :

"Better give it up, Schuyler ; the child is too much for you."

But Godfrey was not inclined to give it up, and said :

"A bargain is a bargain, Miss Gertie, and I shall claim my reward if it is not until you are a hundred. How old are you, little one ?"

"Twelve going on thirteen. How old are you ?"

"Eighteen, going on nineteen," was Godfrey's answer, and as he just then saw his father in a distant part of the vessel, he touched his hat and walked away to set in train the plan he had in his mind for benefiting Gertie Westbrooke.

She interested him greatly, and he wished to do her good, and joining his father, he said :

"By the way, father, have you decided which house you will rent to Mrs. Rogers ?"

"Rent to whom ?" Colonel Schuyler asked. "Who is Mrs. Rogers ?"

He had forgotten her for the moment, but when Godfrey explained that she was Norah's cousin, he remembered that something had been said about her having one of his cottages, but he had not decided which one. Why, what did it matter to Godfrey ?

"It matters this," Godfrey said. "You know my house, which you gave me for my own. Perry wrote me a few days before we sailed that the tenant had left it suddenly, and there was no one in it. Now, if you don't mind, I'd like to let it to Mrs. Rogers."

"Certainly, let it to her if you like," the colonel said, pleased to see in his son what he thought a business proclivity, and a wish to make the most of his property.

He little guessed that it was Godfrey's interest in Gertie which prompted him to wish to see her in his own cottage, the best by far of all the houses known as the Schuyler tenements. It was not new like many of them, but it was very commodious and pretty, with a wealth of vines creeping over the porch, a rose tree near the door, from which Edith herself had plucked the sweet blossoms, and twined them in her hair, for Godfrey's cottage was the very house where Mrs. Fordham once lived, and from which Abelard Lyle was carried to the grave. And Gertie Westbrooke was going there, and Godfrey was already thinking how, as soon as he reached New York, he would telegraph to Perry to have the house cleaned throughout and put in perfect repair for his new tenants.

Meantime Robert Macpherson was puzzling himself over Gertie's face and its resemblance to another.

"How can they be so like, and yet nothing to each other?" he said, and once, when an opportunity occurred, he questioned the child closely with regard to her antecedents, but elicited little more information than she had already given Godfrey in his hearing.

"She was Gertie Westbrooke, born in London, January —, 18—. She had lived for a while in a big house, with her mother, whom she could just remember, and who died when she was two years old, and then a new mother came, who was very cross, and Mary Rogers, her nurse, took her away, and had been so good to her ever since."

"And your father?" Robert asked. "Where is he? Do you never see him?"

"He was cross, too, and drank too much wine," Gertie said; "and auntie says he's dead, and I guess I hain't any relatives now, but a grandmother, and I don't know where she is. I heard auntie tell a woman once that I had a history stranger than a story-book, but when I asked her about it she looked cross, and bade me never listen, and said if there was anything

I ought to know, she would surely tell me. Sometimes when I see grand people, I think, maybe, I am one of them, for I feel just as they act, and could act just like them, if I tried."

"Maybe you are a princess in disguise," Robert said, laying his hand kindly on the bright flowing hair. "Gertie, do you know you are the very image of the only sister I ever had? Dorothea was the name, but I called her Dora, and loved her so much."

"And she died?" Gertie said, guessing the fact from the tremor in the young man's voice and the moisture in his eyes.

"Yes, she died, and I have no picture of her, and that is why I wanted you to sit for me. You are so much like her. Maybe if you tell your aunt the reason she will allow it when we reach America. I am going to Hampstead, too, for a time, to visit Mr. Godfrey. Will you speak to her about it?"

Gertie promised that she would, and kept her word, and Mrs. Rogers said she would see, which Gertie took as an affirmative reply and reported to the young man, telling him, too, that auntie had forbidden her to talk much with him, and telling Godfrey that he must not come where she was, for auntie did not like it, and said it was "no good."

"And I didn't tell her, either, that you kissed me; if I had, she would have been angry, and maybe shut me up in that close, dark stateroom; but you are never to do it again."

"No, not till you say you think me a perfect gentleman; then I shall claim my reward," Godfrey said, laughingly, and as Mary Rogers appeared in view, with the look of a termagant on her face, he turned his back on Gertie and pretended to be very intent upon a sail just appearing in the distant horizon

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LADIES AT SCHUYLER HILL.

MISS CHRISTINE ROSSITER, aged 46 ; Miss Alice Creighton, aged 17 ; Miss Julia Schuyler, aged 16 ; and Miss Emma, aged 14. These were the ladies who, a good portion of the year, were domesticated at Schuyler Hill, and of whom I will speak in order ; and first of Miss Rossiter, whose personal appearance and peculiarities Godfrey had of course exaggerated when he talked of her to Edith. She was his mother's sister, and forty-six, and had once been engaged to a young man who left her all his money, and for whom she wore black half a dozen years, during which time she gave herself to the church, and went so far as to think of turning Romanist, and hiding her grief in a convent. But she recovered from that, and being good-looking, and only thirty, with a fortune of half a million, she went back to the world again, and became a belle, for she was a handsome woman still, and at times exceedingly brilliant and witty, the result, it was whispered at last, of opium-eating in secret. This habit she had contracted during her seclusion, with a view to deaden her grief, and make her sleep at night. And after the grief was over the habit remained, and grew upon her constantly, until now she was never without her vial of the deadly stuff, and her nerves were completely shattered with the poison.

Exceedingly proud and exclusive, she held herself above the most of her acquaintances, and made them feel that she did, and still exercised over them an influence which would draw every one of them to her side when she wished them to come.

Few women understood the art of dressing better than she did, and when arrayed in evening costume, with her diamonds and her lace, she was still a very handsome and attractive woman, capable of entertaining a roomful of guests, and keeping them delighted with her ready wit and brilliant repartees. She should never marry, she said, and yet more than Godfrey be

lieved that she had no objection to becoming Mrs. Schuyler second, if only she were asked to do so. Since her sister's death she had spent most of her time at the Hill, giving as an excuse that "Emily's children needed a mother's care so badly," while Howard was always happier to have her there.

Of this last there might have been two opinions, but the colonel was a peaceable man, and always made her welcome, and humored her whims and listened to her advice when he chose to do so, and offered no remonstrance when she appropriated to herself the very best and pleasantest room in the house, the one with the bay-window overlooking the river and the mountains, and which, as it chanced to be in the south wing, was one of the suite intended for Edith, and which she surrendered, with what reluctance we shall see hereafter.

Alice Creighton was Col. Schuyler's ward and the niece of the wife of Mrs. Schuyler's half brother, the Rev. John Calvert, who lived in New York, and whose house was properly her home, though she spent much of her time at Schuyler Hill, where her education was progressing under the direction of Miss Browning, the governess. Short, fat, and chubby, with light hair and eyes and complexion, and a nose that turned up decidedly, she was not very pretty, save as young, happy girlhood is always pretty, but she was very stylish, which answered instead of beauty, and made her remarked wherever she went. Whatever was fashionable she wore in the extreme, and at the little church in Hampstead there was on Sundays a great deal of curiosity among the village girls to see the last new style, as represented by Miss Creighton. And after they saw it they copied it as far as was possible, and then found to their surprise that what they had adopted as the latest in the beau-monde, was laid aside for something later by their mirror of fashion.

She expected to marry Godfrey, for the arrangement had been settled between her father, before he died, and Col. Howard Schuyler; and Alice acquiesced in it, and looked confidently forward to a time when she would have a house of her own and furnish it as no house in New York had ever yet been furnished, and keep seven servants at least, with horses and carriages, and

nothing to do from morning till night but enjoy herself, and be envied in doing it. To all this grandeur Godfrey would be a very proper appendage. He was good-looking, and came from a family superior even to her own ; he could be a gentleman when he chose, and would look very nicely beside her in the Park and at the opera, and when she entered the drawing-rooms on Fifth Avenue on some festive occasion.

This was Miss Alice Creighton, as nearly as I can daguerreotype her at the time of which I write, while Julia Schuyler was much like her in disposition, but different in looks.

Julia was tall and slender, and a brunette, with clear, olive complexion, high color, sparkling black eyes, and a quantity of glossy, black hair, of which she was very proud, and which she usually wore becomingly, let the fashion be what it might. Some people called her beautiful, but that she could never be with her wide mouth and large ears, but she certainly was handsome and bright, and could, if she chose, be very agreeable and fascinating, but, except with her equals, she did not often choose, and was known in town as a proud, haughty girl, caring only for herself and the few favored ones belonging to her circle. And yet she taught in Sunday-school, and made dresses and aprons for the poor, and esteemed herself almost a saint, because she once carried with her own hands a dish of soup to poor, old, bedridden Mrs. Vandeusenhisen, whose grandchild was called for Alice at the instigation of the mischievous Godfrey.

Both Julia and Alice went sometimes on errands of mercy, and wore gray cloaks with scarlet facings to the cape, and felt themselves on a par with the sisters of charity, and had a lump of camphor in their pockets to prevent contagion, and asked the little ones if they knew the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, affecting great surprise if they did not, and telling them if they did that they ought to be confirmed at once and grow up respectable citizens.

Very different from these young ladies was pale-faced, quiet **Emma**, who believed everybody to be what he seemed, and wished herself as good as Alice and Julia, who were so devout

at church, and who read a long chapter every morning and short psalm every night. Emma did not like to read the Bible, and always glanced ahead to see how long the chapter was, and felt glad when it was ended. And she did not like to visit the poor because as a general thing the close air of the rooms made her sick, and she was always unhappy for a whole day with thinking about them and fancying how she would feel were she also poor.

And yet of the three girls I liked Emma best, for I knew just how true, and honest, and innocent she was, and that though she too was proud, she tried to overcome her pride, because she thought it wrong, and in her heart had a sincere desire to do just what was right. No one ever called Emma handsome; her features were too sharp for that, but there was something in her smile and the expression of her soft, dark eyes which made her very attractive, and, as I thought, prettier than Julia herself.

Take them altogether the ladies at Schuyler Hill were quite *distingué* in manner and appearance, and we were rather proud to have them with us, for their presence added something of importance to our little town, and gave a certain *éclat* to our society. Nor was their governess, Miss Helen Browning, much behind in style and personal appearance. Indeed, she prided herself upon manner and good breeding, and knew every point of etiquette, from sitting bolt-upright in her chair, with just the two tips of her boots visible, to eating soup with the side of her spoon, and never on any account allowing her hands to touch the table.

And now, last of all, comes Mrs. Tiffe, the housekeeper, a dignified, energetic woman of fifty, who wore black silk every day, with pink ribbons in her cap, and who, after several hard-fought battles with Miss Rossiter for the supremacy, had come off victorious, and reigned triumphant at Schuyler Hill, where she feared no one save the colonel himself, and liked no one but Godfrey. He was her idol, and he alone could unlock the mysterious closet under the stairs, and call forth jam, and jelly and even marmalade, if he liked. Such lunches as she gave the ladies when they were alone, and Godfrey not there to *coax*,

or the colonel to insist! A chicken wing and back, with a slice of bread and butter, and possibly a baked apple, if there chanced to be any "standing round" in danger of spoiling; while her breakfasts were delicate and dainty enough for a fairy, or the worst form which dyspepsia ever assumed. "Frugal repasts," Godfrey called them; but for their frugality Mrs. Tiffe made amends at dinner, which was served with great profusion, and all the elegance the house could command. Nothing was too nice for dinner; and Mrs. Tiffe, felt her heart swell with pride when she saw her ladies, handsomely dressed, filing into the spacious dining-room, where the table was bright with silver and flowers. To her the Schuylers and Rossiters represented the world, and anybody outside that world, unless it were Miss Creighton, was looked upon with disgust, and barely tolerated. Miss Christine, it is true, was not a favorite, but she was a Rossiter, and Mrs. Tiffe charged all her faults to the fact that "she was an old maid, and couldn't help being queer," and so endured her quietly when her own wishes were not opposed.

And this was the household into which the news of Col. Schuyler's second marriage fell like a bombshell in the enemy's camp, wounding each one, and wringing from each one a cry according to her disposition. But for a description of this I must take a fresh sheet and begin another chapter.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE NEWS AT SCHUYLER HILL.

IT came to them one sultry August morning, when the thermometer was 90 degrees in the shade, and the air was like a furnace even before nine o'clock. Breakfast was very late that morning, and Mrs. Tiffe was furious. She had committed the extravagance of broiled chicken and muffins, which of course were spoiled, and she had herself been up since four o'clock and was in a melting condition, in spite of the thinnest muslin she could find and the coolest

garments she could wear. Miss Rossiter had not slept well, and, as was her custom after a restless night, she loitered in bed, and dawdled over her toilet and bath, and took so much time in dressing, that the clock was striking nine when she at last entered the dining-room, followed by the three girls and their governess, all panting and inveighing against the weather, except Emma. She liked it. Naturally chilly and cold, the heat suited her, and her face alone was pleasant and contented as she took her seat at the table and attacked the cold chicken and half-warm, heavy muffins, which her dyspeptic aunt could not eat.

"Bring me a slice of dry toast," Miss Rossiter said to Martha, the waitress, who, on returning with the toast, brought two letters for Miss Julia, bearing foreign post-marks.

"From father and Godfrey," Julia said. "Excuse me, please, while I read them."

Leaning back in her chair she broke the seal of her father's first and read a few lines, then with a start which nearly upset her cup of chocolate, she exclaimed :

"Oh, horrible, girls ! Aunt Christine, listen,—father——"

"Martha, you can go, now," she said suddenly, remembering the girl, who departed to the kitchen, where the news was already known, and where the servants stood open-mouthed around Perry, who was reading the letter his master had sent to him.

"What is it, Julia?" Miss Rossiter asked, when Martha was gone, and Julia, whose eyes had run at lightning speed over the contents of the letter, replied :

"Father is going to be married to a Miss Edith Lyle, Aunt Sinclair's hired companion. You remember he mentioned her once before as living at Oakwood. Hear what he says of her : 'She is a lady of good family, the daughter of a clergyman, the friend and companion of my deceased sister, your late Aunt Sinclair. She possesses many accomplishments, and is what I consider a very remarkable personage.' (How like father that sounds !) 'And I expect that all due deference will be paid to her by *every member of my household.*' (He has un-

derscored that.) 'Please break the news to your Aunt Christine, and tell Mrs. Tiffe to see that all the rooms in the south wing are made ready for Mrs. Schuyler. I have written to Perry about refurnishing them, but Tiffe must superintend it a little——'

"Oh, dreadful, I believe I am going to faint,—my hartshorn, Emma, please," Miss Rossiter gasped.

The hartshorn was found, and two palm-leaf fans were brought into requisition, and then Miss Rossiter spoke again, this time hysterically and in tears.

"My poor sister, to be so insulted! A hired companion! and she was a Rossiter! Oh, I cannot bear it, my poor disgraced nieces, my heart is breaking for you."

"But, Aunt Christine, he says she is a lady, the daughter of a clergyman," Emma said, soothingly,—hers the only voice raised in defence of the intruder,—the interloper,—the adventuress,—as Miss Rossiter termed the expected bride.

Emma's heart had throbbed painfully at the thought of a new mother, but it was natural for her to defend whatever she believed abused, and she spoke up for the unknown Edith, until Julia, who had been reading Godfrey's letter, uttered a cry of bitter anger and scorn, and said, sternly:

"Hush, Em, you don't know what you are talking about; a lady, indeed, and the daughter of a clergyman! A woman of forty, with a limp, and glass eye, and cracked voice, is a nice mother to bring us!"

"A wha-at?" Miss Rossiter gasped, while Alice and Emma both exclaimed simultaneously: "A limp and a glass eye! What do you mean? Let me see;" and looking over Julia's shoulder Alice read aloud what Godfrey had written.

Godfrey had said, "The sight of her will take your breath away," and in fact the very thought of her did that, and for full a minute after the letter was read there was not a sound heard in the room where the indignant and confounded ladies sat, each staring blankly at the other, and neither able to speak or move. Miss Rossiter was the first to stir, and with a moaning cry, "I cannot bear it," she went into violent hysterics, and

Martha was called in, and the poor lady was taken to her room, where she tried, one after another, every bottle of medicine in her closet, but to no effect; even the Crown Bitters failed, and she sank upon the bed, shivering with cold, and asking for shawls and blankets on that August day, with a temperature of ninety degrees in the shade.

Perhaps Miss Rossiter herself had not been aware how much Colonel Howard was to her, or how hard it would be to see another woman there in her sister's place. She had too much sense to believe she would ever fill it, yet the first smart had been that of disappointment and a sense of wrong to herself, while the second was a keen pang of mortification and anger, that if he must choose another he had chosen that caricature on womanhood described so graphically by Godfrey. It is true she did not quite believe him literally. Neither did his sisters, who sat in the library with white faces and tearful eyes. Julia was wrathful and defiant, and was already in a state of fierce rebellion against the woman of forty with the crack in her voice. So much she believed, but the limp and glass eye were too thoroughly Godfrey's to be trusted.

"Probably the woman is lame and wears glasses," she said, when she could trust herself to speak at all, "and perhaps she squints, but I have no faith in the glass eye. Godfrey made that up. Father is not the man to marry such a monster, and then expect us to pay all due deference to her. The idea of my deferring to such a woman. I hate her. I'll poison her, the wretch!"

Julia Schuyler was terrible in her wrath, and with that expression in her flashing eyes and about the white quivering lips, she looked equal to anything, and Edith might well have trembled could she have seen the dark-faced girl, who, with clenched fists, threatened to poison her. Julia would not of course acknowledge that she really had murder in her heart, but she felt outraged, and insulted, and disgraced, and as if she must do something to avert the horrible evil threatening them all. But what could she do? To oppose her will to her father's was like trying to move a mountain of stone with her puny strength. The moun-

tain would not be hurt, and only she would suffer from the attempt.

There was no help, no hope, and when her anger had spent itself she burst into tears and sobbed passionately, just as Emma had done from the first, but with this difference, she cried from wrath and indignant mortification, while Emma's tears were more for the dead mother whose place was to be filled, and whose death it seemed to her now had only been yesterday.

The governess, who knew that remark of any kind from herself would be resented as impertinent, wisely said nothing, while Alice, too, was silent, except as she occasionally said to Julia, "It is too bad, and I am sorry for you ; sorry for us all."

Looking upon Godfrey as her own especial property, Alice felt that whatever affected the Schuylers affected her, and she was sorry accordingly for this thing about to happen, but it did not hurt her as it did Julia and Emma, who must call the strange woman mother, and who wept on until Miss Rossiter sent for them to come to her room together with Miss Creighton. She had taken some brandy, and felt better, though her heart was aching still with a dreary sense of loss, and disappointment, and disgrace, if half Godfrey had written was true, and half was all that any stretch of her imagination would allow her to believe, and when the young girls entered the room she said to them :

"I have sent for you to talk over this dreadful thing, and to say that I do not credit all Godfrey's story. He is a sad boy to exaggerate, you know. Still, let the woman be what she may, we do not want her here where we have been so happy."

Miss Rossiter's voice faltered a little, but soon recovering herself, she continued :

"No, we do not want her here ; and I for one declare war,—*war to the knife !*"

She spoke bitterly now, and her black eyes flashed with contemptuous scorn.

"But Aunt Christine," Emma said, "it is father's house, and he will not let you treat her badly."

"Nor shall I," Miss Rossiter said, loftily ; "I shall let her alone severely, and leave as soon as possible after her arrival

Nor shall I leave my sister's daughters with the adventuress I've been thinking it over, and have concluded to rent or buy a place in New York, and set up housekeeping for myself, in which case you will go with me, and leave your father to enjoy life with his low-born bride."

"Father wrote she was a lady, and Godfrey says we shall like her," Emma quickly interposed, feeling that for herself she preferred staying with the "adventuress" to living with Aunt Christine.

Julia, on the contrary, was caught with the house in New York. The city was far more to her taste than the dull country, and, with a withering glance at her sister, she said:

"I'm ashamed of you, Em, that you cannot appreciate auntie's offer, but speak, instead, for that woman. I, for one, am greatly obliged to auntie, and shall go with her to New York?"

"And I, too, if she will have me. I'd rather live anywhere than at Uncle Calvert's," Alice said; "and I hope the house will be near the Park. Won't it be nice, though?"

"Yes, I mean to have it nice," Miss Rossiter said, warming into something like enthusiasm as she thought of a home of her own. "I shall furnish it elegantly, and have a reception every week, with little *recherché* dinner parties for our circle."

Julia began to be interested, and hoped she should see a little society before she was quite forty, while Alice resolved to be married from that house near the Park, instead of "Uncle Calvert's poky little bandbox down on Washington Square."

And while the three ladies planned and talked of the new house in the city, each was conscious of a pang as she thought of leaving the delightful place, where was so much of comfort and luxury, with no shadow of care or trouble. And of the three, Miss Rossiter felt it the most keenly. Naturally indolent and fond of her ease, she had enjoyed her sister's house, and hated much to leave it, but the fiat had gone forth.

There was to be a new mistress at Schuyler Hill, whose name was not Rossiter, and she must go. She settled that point at

once, and then said to the young girls by way of caution, for pride in her brother-in-law was still strong within her :

"I think it will be better not to mention Godfrey's letter,—that is, not to speak of the woman's personal appearance which may not be so bad as we fear. Let her show for herself what she is. We must tell, of course, of the expected marriage, but we need say nothing further."

In this reasonable advice all three of the girls concurred, and yet through some agency it was soon rumored all over Hampstead that the new lady of Schuyler Hill was *deformed*, and homely and poor, and the hired companion of the late Mrs. Sinclair, and that Miss Rossiter had declared war to the knife, while Julia talked of poison, and Emma cried day and night and would not be comforted. Who told all this, nobody knew. Possibly it was the governess, and possibly Mrs. Tiffe, who bristled all over those days with importance and secret exultation over her routed and discomfited foe, poor Miss Rossiter. Mrs. Tiffe had had her letter from Col. Schuyler, and Perry, her son, had his also, in which were numerous instructions with regard to the refurnishing of the rooms in the south wing. "All the rooms," the colonel had said, and he was minute in his directions with regard to the corner room with the bay-window overlooking the river and the mountains beyond. This was to be Mrs. Schuyler's boudoir, or private sitting-room, and was to be fitted up in drab and pale rose pink, while the sleeping-room, which was separated from it by bath-room and dressing-closet, was to be furnished with blue, and the little room beyond, where the colonel kept his books and private papers, was to be green and oak.

"Let everything be new and in the latest style," the colonel wrote to Perry. "You can get men up from New York who will know just what is needful, while the ladies and your mother will give you the benefit of their advice and good taste, so I shall expect to find everything perfect when I come."

To Mrs. Tiffe the colonel wrote, saying that from past experience he knew he could rely upon her, and hoped she would give the matter her own personal supervision, in which case it

would be right. Thus flattered and trusted and deferred to, Mrs. Tiffe espoused the cause of the new wife, and hurrahed for the coming change of government at Schuyler Hill. Anything was preferable to Miss Rossiter, and Mrs. Tiffe cared little whether Edith walked with two crutches or one, provided she freed her from the enemy.

"My son will obey orders to the letter," she said, crisply, when Julia asked what Perry meant to do. "If the colonel says the south wing must be cleared and refurnished, it will be, and Miss Rossiter may as well vacate to-day as to-morrow. There's no time to be lost in dawdling."

Now, the corner room, with the wide bay-window, was the room of all others which Miss Rossiter preferred, and she had appropriated it to herself and held possession of it in spite of Mrs. Tiffe's broad hints that there were other apartments in the house besides the "very best chamber." But she must give it up now, and with many a sigh of regret she saw Kitty gather up her bottles of medicine, her boxes of pills, her wine and her brandy, and galvanic battery, and bear them to another closet on the opposite side of the house, away from the river and mountains, where her only view was the little town, which she detested, and the hill rising darkly behind it. It was hard, and Miss Rossiter felt very much injured and aggrieved, and cried softly to herself, and thought very bitter things of that woman who had brought her to this strait, and for whom the house was being turned upside down.

Mrs. Tiffe was already at work with her maids in the south wing taking up carpets, removing furniture, washing windows, and in the room just vacated by Miss Rossiter burning coffee, and sugar, and paper by way of removing the smell of drugs with which the apartment was permeated. But do what she would the faint odor of valerian was still perceptible, making the good woman "sick as a dog," as she expressed it, and bringing into requisition as a last experiment burnt feathers, which, combined with the valerian, made the atmosphere of the place unbearable.

"Paint will do it and nothing else," was Mrs. Tiffe's final

verdict, as she retreated to the open window and leaned out for a breath of pure air.

Not the slightest interest did either of the ladies show in the changes being made, but Mrs. Tiffe and her son felt themselves equal to the task until it came to selecting carpets, and furniture and curtains in New York. Then Perry said some one ought to go with him and not let him take the entire responsibility.

But neither Miss Rossiter, nor Julia, nor Alice, made any response, and the probability was that he would go alone until the morning came, when Emma appeared at breakfast in her walking-dress and announced her intention to accompany Perry.

"Somebody ought to go for father's sake," she said; "and if no one else will, I must. I shall stop at Uncle Calvert's and get auntie to help me."

To this there was no open opposition. Miss Rossiter had the toothache and could not talk, while Julia merely raised her eyebrows in token of her surprise; and Alice said:

"You are certainly very kind, Em, and forgiving, to be so much interested for that woman."

"It isn't for that woman; it's for father, and because I know he wishes it," Emma replied, as she put on her hat and shawl and started with Perry for New York.

She was gone three days, and at the end of that time four men appeared at Schuyler Hill and commenced the work of measuring, repainting and frescoing the rooms intended for the bride. Then in due time came the carpets, and the lambrequins, and the lace curtains, and the furniture, and more men to see that everything fitted and was as it should be.

"Handsome enough for the queen herself," Mrs. Tiffe said, when all was done, and she walked complacently through the suite of rooms, sniffing occasionally as she passed the open closet, to see if there lingered yet the faintest approach to valerian or drug of any kind.

There did not. Paint and varnish had killed all that, and the air of the rooms was pure and sweet as the rooms themselves

were beautiful and attractive. I used those days to be occasionally at the great house, and, as I never presumed upon my acquaintance with the ladies, or tried to force myself upon their notice, they treated me with a good deal of kindness, and seemed to like my society. So when, one Saturday morning after the repairs were finished, I met Miss Julia in the village, and she said, in her usual half-cordial, half-indifferent tone, "What an age it is since you were to see us. Suppose you come round this afternoon, and have a game of croquet, and stay to dinner," I accepted the invitation, and at about 4 P.M. rang the bell at Schuyler Hill.

I did not suppose I was very early, especially as we were to play croquet; but the ladies, who always slept after lunch, were not yet dressed, and so I went with Mrs. Tiffe to the kitchen, to see some jelly she had been making, and which had "come beautifully." As I was about returning to the parlor she said to me:

"Don't you want to see them rooms?"

I knew what she meant, and answered that I did.

Taking me first into the green room, where the oak leaves in the rich velvet carpet looked as if you might pick them up, Mrs. Tiffe opened the doors through, and asked what I thought of the effect. It was beautiful beyond anything I had dreamed. Especially was I delighted with the parlor, where the carpet was of that soft chiné pattern so tasteful and exquisite; and the furniture was delicate drab, with trimmings of pale rose pink. There were rare pictures on the wall, and curtains of finely-wrought lace before the windows, with lambrequins of rose pink satin to match the furniture, while cushions, and easy-chairs, and ottomans, and inlaid tables, which almost told their price themselves, were scattered about in such a way as to give the room an air of cosey, home-like comfort as well as elegance.

How lovely it all was, and how like a dream it seemed to be looking at it, and knowing that it was real and not a mere illusion! Then, as I remembered what I had heard of the bride's deformity and plainness, I thought it such a pity that the occupant of these rooms should not be lovely like them, and a fitting ornament for so much grandeur.

Lady Emily, with her pale, sallow face and expressionless eyes, would have looked better there, I said, or even Miss Rossiter herself, who when dressed and feeling well was still very attractive, and when I went down stairs and found her sitting on the veranda, in her white cambric dress, with the scarlet shawl she wore so much wrapped around her, her glossy black hair becomingly arranged, with a single white flower among the heavy braids, I thought the colonel would have done far better to have taken her than the bride he had chosen.

We had a very quiet, stupid, six-hand game of croquet, and the dinner was quieter, stupider still, for all the ladies seemed preoccupied and disinclined to talk. Not a word was said of the marriage by any one until I was leaving, when Emma came up to me, and whispered softly :

"They are in New York. We had a telegram this afternoon."

She did not say who *they* were, but I pressed her hand in token of my sympathy, for I knew that *they* had reference to the new mistress of Schuyler Hill.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MRS. ROGERS AND GERTIE AT HAMPSTEAD.

THE voyage, which, owing to adverse winds, had been unusually long, was over, and the names of "Col. Schuyler, lady and maid" were registered at the hotel, where they were to stop for a week or more before going to their home in Hampstead. Macpherson and Godfrey were there also, the latter showing the city to his friend, who cared only for the studios and galleries of paintings. After her husband's reproof Edith had made no attempt to see Gertie Westbrook, but she had inquired for her every day and sent many delicacies to her, and once, in the distance she had seen her shawl wrapped around a little figure which was leaning over the railing, with masses of bright hair falling beneath the scarlet

hood, and to herself she said: "That must be Gertie West brooke."

But further than that she knew nothing of the child, until she heard Godfrey talking to his father about the cottage Mrs. Rogers was to have.

"Yes, certainly, I'll ask Mrs. Schuyler," Colonel Schuyler said to some suggestion of Godfrey, and then added, with a laugh: "It seems, Edith, that this child in whom you were so much interested is to be my tenant, or rather Godfrey's, as the cottage is his. He, too, has taken a most unaccountable fancy to the girl, and as I have ordered your suite of rooms to be wholly refurnished, Godfrey has suggested that we let this Mrs. Rogers have as much of the old furniture as will be suitable for that cottage. She has everything to buy, of course, and not much means, I dare say."

This was just like Colonel Schuyler. He was very generous with his pride, and he really wished to make some amends for his conduct with regard to Gertie and the shawl. Ever since that affair he had felt that he might have acted hastily, while Edith's meek acquiescence with his wishes touched him in a tender point, and now, when the Rogers people came into notice again, he seized the opportunity to do them a favor if possible.

"They can think they are renting the furniture with the house," he said; and as Edith signified her approval without in the least suspecting what cottage it was which was to receive the furniture from Schuyler Hill, the matter was decided, and Mrs. Rogers was told that she would find the house partly furnished, a fact which gave her much satisfaction.

Since the failure of the bank, money had been scarce with her, and as she could not afford to remain long in New York, even at a cheap boarding-house, she started for Hampstead the third day after landing. Godfrey's telegram had been received by Perry, the agent, but there was no time for repairs, nor were they needed, as the house had been well kept up and was clean as soap and water and the hands of the late occupant could make it. At the time of refurnishing Edith's rooms at Schuyler Hill the old furniture had been stored away, some in the ser-

vants' rooms, some in the attic, and some in the barn, but it was brought together according to the colonel's orders, and deposited in the cottage, where it lay waiting the arrival of the new tenants, concerning whom there was much speculation in our little town.

I was on my way from school,—for I was still the village schoolmistress,—and, seeing the door open and people moving about inside, I passed through the gate, and entered the rooms, where I had last seen Heloise Fordham. People called it "Vine Cottage," it was so entirely covered with vines and creepers, and surrounded with flowering shrubs. And a very pretty place it was, too; for, since it had been Godfrey's, he had taken great pains to keep it up, and beautify the yard and garden, both of which were fashioned a little after the grounds at Schuyler Hill.

Such a place could not go begging for tenants, but for some reason it had been vacant for five or six weeks, when Godfrey's telegram was received, bidding Perry get it in readiness for Mrs. Rogers. As we have seen, Perry obeyed orders, and, in spite of the wry faces of the young ladies and Miss Christine's remonstrance, he collected the articles named in Colonel Schuyler's dispatch, and carried them to the cottage, where I found them scattered about promiscuously, a half-worn velvet carpet here, a marble table and stand there, and in another place a beautiful rosewood bedstead, bearing the marks of the boy Godfrey's jack-knife, and a handsome bureau, both too tall to stand in any room except the parlor, where they were not wanted.

"What is all this?" I asked, as I stepped over oil-cloth, and hearth-rug, and curtains. "Who is going to live here?"

"A Mrs. Rogers, cousin to the new madame's waiting-maid," Perry replied, with a certain intonation in his voice, which showed me that he had taken his cue from the house on the Hill, and was not inclined to regard with favor the cousin of "madame's waiting-maid."

"When is Mrs. Rogers expected?" I asked, and he replied:

"She may come any time, but the colonel will not be

here for two weeks or more. There's the old Harry to pay up there," and he nodded toward the house on the Hill. "I tell you, Miss Rossiter and Miss Schuyler is ridin' their highest norses."

It was not for me to question him, and so I made him no reply, but improved the opportunity of going through the house where my old friend, Heloise Fordham, used to live, and where I had bidden her good-by with promises to care for that grave on the hillside. And I had cared for it regularly at first, and then as years went by and she neither came to see my work nor sent me any word, I gradually began to grow a little lax in my labors, and now it was months since I had thought of it. But I remembered it that morning when I stood in Heloise's old room, where I had seen her with the tears in her eyes and the tremor in her voice as she talked to me of Abelard, who "was not her beau," and yet very dear to her. There by the window she had stood and cut the long curl of hair and given me the vase for Abelard's grave.

"And where is the young girl?" I asked myself, "and why has she never written me a line in all these years?"

Then as I thought of the neglected grave, I said, aloud :

"I'll go there to-morrow and see what I can do. It must be sadly overgrown by this time."

But it rained the next day and the next, and so I did not go, but came each day by the cottage, where at last I saw the new tenants, Mrs. Rogers and little Gertie Westbrooke.

The child was in the garden close by the fence, and glanced up at me with a look which made me stop instantly to gaze at her, while the smile which broke over her face and shone in her blue eyes took me straight through the gate to her side, and before I knew at all what I was doing or why I was doing it, I was talking to her and seeming to myself like one who walks in a dream and sees there things which he has known and seen before.

Surely that smile, which came and went so frequently, and that voice so clear, and sweet, and ringing, were familiar to me, and I said to the child :

"Have you been here before?"

"No, ma'am; I was born in London. I never was in America until now, and yet it's funny that this place seems like home, and my room is just what I thought it would be. Won't you walk in, please, and see auntie?" she said, and I followed her into the cottage, where she presented me to the woman there with all the air and grace of one born to the purple.

"Auntie, Mrs. Rogers; this lady is,—I don't believe I know your name."

And she turned inquiringly to me.

I told her who I was, and then inspected Mrs. Rogers curiously, and wondered to find her so different from Gertie. She spoke very well and appeared well, but showed at once the class to which she belonged; nor did she make pretensions to anything else than she really was,—a plain, sensible woman, who had come to America to better herself and be near Norah, her cousin.

She wanted work, she said, and asked what the probabilities were of her obtaining employment in Hampstead, either as plain sewer or dressmaker, or both. Of course, I heard about the lost money in the bank, and received the impression that she had seen better days. Everybody who comes from the old country has, but that was natural, and I liked her on the whole, and thought her a woman of great tact and observation, and promised her my plain sewing and my influence if she pleased me.

She was very anxious to send Gertie to school at once, she said, and the next day she sat in my schoolroom in her dainty dress of blue, with her white-ruffled apron, and her auburn hair rippling all over her finely-shaped, intellectual head. I walked home with her that night, and found Mrs. Rogers in a great deal of trouble about the bedstead and the bureau, which seemed so out of place in the cottage.

"Where did they come from? Did the other tenants use them?" she asked, and as I did not see fit to enlighten her, she finally determined to store them away in the woodshed until Mr. Godfrey came. "I am able to furnish a few rooms de

cently well myself," she said; and three days after, when I called on my way from school, Gertie took me to her room and asked me how I liked it.

It was the same Heloise Fordham used to occupy, and it seemed as if she was there again at my side, as I stood looking at the pretty ingrain carpet and the single bed, with its snow-white draperies, the low chair near the window, and the table for Gertie's work, and the swinging-shelf for her books.

"It is a pretty room," I said, "and it looks as it did when Heloise was here."

"Who?" Gertie asked, sweeping her hair back from her forehead, just as I had seen Heloise do so many times. "Who did you say used to be here?"

"Heloise Fordham, a young girl about my age, or a little older, whose mother occupied this cottage twelve or thirteen years ago," I replied; and Gertie rejoined:

"Why, that is my name, too!"

"Is it?" I asked, and she rejoined:

"Yes, Gertrude Heloise. I write it Gertrude H. for short. Don't you know?"

I did not know, and I had no suspicion of that which, had I known it then, would have taken my senses away, I verily believe.

"Tell me about your friend," she said. "Was she pretty, and good, and happy? I like to know who has occupied my room before me. At Stonewark, where we were a few weeks last summer, they said my room was haunted by a girl who killed herself for love. Auntie did not wish me to sleep there. She's a bit superstitious, but I was not afraid. I liked it, and tried to keep awake nights to see the ghost which threw itself out of the window just at midnight, but I always went to sleep before it came. Where is Heloise, now?"

I did not know, but, questioned by the eager little girl, I told a part of the story, and then, as she grew interested and begged for "the whole, the very whole," I told it her, thinking there was no harm in telling, as no one could be wronged. Heloise

was either married or dead, the latter probably, or she would have written to me, and so it was no matter if I did tell her story and Abelard's to the child who listened so intently, her eyes filling with tears, which rolled down her cheeks when I spoke of the dead man lying on the grass, his face all wet with blood and a withered white rose pressed inside his flannel shirt. I suppose she cried for him, and to a certain extent I dare say she did, though her first words were : " Poor fellow, I'm so glad he didn't let Godfrey be killed."

This was the first time she had mentioned Godfrey to me, and as I had the impression that she did not know him, I was going to ask her about it when she said, eagerly :

" And he was the young girl's lover, and she only fifteen ; that's funny. I'm twelve, and I should not think of having a beau ; but go on and tell me more, and what they did with him, and what she did, and all of them."

I told her what they did, and how for a day and a night the body lay in the parlor below, and where they buried it, and about the monument and my promise to keep the grave clean and nice.

" And have you done it ?" Gertie asked, her cheeks like roses and her eyes as bright as stars.

I confessed to recent neglect, and said I had not been there once during the summer.

" Then it's awful by this time," Gertie said. " Let's go and fix it to-morrow, you and I, will you ?"

I promised that I would, and then, as it was growing dark, I bade her good-night, she saying to me in a whisper :

" I'll not tell auntie about that girl who used to have my room, because if I did I'd have to tell about the body which lay in the parlor, and she would surely see his ghost. She's afraid of 'em, you know. I guess that class always are."

She spoke of her auntie's belonging to a class different from herself as naturally as possible, and still with no shadow of contempt or disrespect in her voice. Mrs. Rogers had always taught her that though she must expect nothing from others on account of it, she was superior to people like herself and Norah,

and Gertie accepted it as a fact, not knowing exactly whether it was the forty pounds a year or the big house where she used to live, or the dead mother, or the father who would not own her, or the grandmother she had never seen, which gave her the precedence.

The next day, true to my promise, I took Gertie to the Schuyler Cemetery and showed her Abelard's grave.

"James A. Lyle, born in Alnwick, England, 18—. Died June —, 18—, aged 23 years. Honor to the dead who died to save another's life," she read aloud, kneeling on the grass before the monument which marked his resting-place.

"Oh, how nice that is. 'Honor to the dead who died to save another's life,' and that other was Mr. Godfrey," she said. "And Colonel Schuyler put it here. I like him now better than I did. I thought he was proud and cold, but there must be good in him. Why, it's a splendid stone, and must have cost as much as,—as much as forty pounds."

Her income was her maximum for an unheard-of sum, and she stood gazing admiringly at the stone, while her busy tongue went on.

"And this is a pretty yard, with all those old Schuylers buried here. I mean, old really, you know. I don't say it for bad nicknames. They were all old. 'Emily, beloved wife of Colonel Howard Schuyler, aged 36,' is the youngest of them all, and she was awful old. That must be Colonel Schuyler's first wife, Mr. Godfrey's mother. Was she as pretty, I wonder, as the new lady is? No, you have not kept the grave up nice; that girl would feel badly if she saw it. Let's go straight to work and pull up the nasty weeds first; and look, here's a clump of lovely forget-me-nots down in the grass, and sweet English violets."

She talked so fast and went so rapidly from one thing to another that I had no chance to say a word, but stood watching her silently as she worked with a will, pulling up the weeds and digging about the flowers which had been making a faint struggle for life in the grass which impeded their growth. Whether she was working for the sake of the young girl He

loise, or because it was Godfrey's life which had been saved by the necessity for that grave, I could not tell. She talked of both, and when her task was done, and flushed and heated with exercise, she sat down to rest, she said :

"There, Miss Heloise Fordham will feel better now, I hope, and I wouldn't wonder if Mr. Godfrey liked me to be kind to the man who saved his life. Was she very pretty, Miss Armstrong?"

I knew she meant Heloise, although her last remark had been of Godfrey, and I replied :

"Yes, very pretty Do you know *you* look a little like her, only your hair is auburn, and hers was golden brown, while your eyes are blue and hers were a brownish gray."

"Do I? Am I like her? Am I pretty? Mr. Godfrey said I was," she exclaimed, her face lighting up with a glow which made her, as I thought, the most beautiful creature I had ever seen.

"You have spoken of Mr. Godfrey several times," I said. "Where did you know him?"

"Why, on the ship and in the cab, and in the church when his new mother was married, and everywhere," she replied ; and then, by dint of a few questions adroitly put, I heard nearly all she had to tell of Godfrey, who had stared at her in the cab, and kissed her flowers in church, and herself on shipboard.

"But he'll never do that again," she said. "I told him it wasn't proper, and he said he wouldn't, until—until—" her face grew crimson as she continued,—“until I could say I thought him a perfect gentleman, with no slang or nonsense, and then he is to kiss me again, but that will never be, I reckon."

She stuck up the toe of her little foot and looked demurely at it while she settled the kissing affair with so much gravity, and I,—well, my thoughts did leap into the future and then leaped back again when I remembered Alice Creighton and the proud girls at Schuyler Hill. As if divining something of my thoughts, Gertie asked, abruptly : "Do you know Mr. Godfrey's sisters? He told me he had two."

"Yes, I know them ; they were my pupils last year, when *their* governess left suddenly," I said ; and she continued :

"Are they pretty, and shall I ever see them?"

I dare say she meant to ask if they would notice her, and as I knew they would not I gave her question another meaning, and replied :

"They are almost always at church, and the Schuyler pew is the large square one in front. You will be sure to see them there."

"Yes, I am going next Sunday, but we must sit near the door, I suppose. Still, I shall see them come in, for I mean to be early, and I do hope Mr. Godfrey will be here by that time with the beautiful lady Edith.

Here was an opportunity I could not let slip, my woman's curiosity was so strong, and so I said :

"Is Mrs. Schuyler beautiful?"

"Yes, I guess she is ; the beautifullest woman I ever saw. Why, she looked like a queen the morning she was married, and more like his daughter than his wife."

"Have you seen her often? Were you near her in church?" I asked in some surprise, unable to reconcile her statement of the new Mrs. Schuyler's beauty, with a rumor which had reached me in a roundabout way concerning her age and personal appearance.

"Yes, I was very near her in church and threw her some flowers, and I saw her many times at Oakwood, in the grounds where she walked in her pretty white dresses. I did not speak to her, you know. I was some ways off, but I could see how handsome she was, and everybody said so, too."

Gertie's reply puzzled me, for I knew that the Schuyler Hill ladies were expecting something dreadful in the bride and were preparing themselves accordingly, while Gertie's story seemed to contradict the entire thing. But all I had to do was to wait and see for myself, so I asked no more questions, and as the afternoon was drawing to a close, we left the cemetery and took a path homeward, which led near to the great house on the hill. The ladies were playing croquet on the lawn, and Gertie pulled my dress and whispered :

"See, there they are, four ladies ; which are the sisters, and who are the others?"

I pointed out Julia and Emma Schuyler, and told her the lady in the black dress and scarlet shawl was Miss Rossiter, Godfrey's aunt, and that the light-haired girl, with her hair put up so high, was Miss Alice Creighton from New York, who spent a great deal of time at Schuyler Hill, as the colonel was her guardian.

"Oh, how I like to play croquet! Why, if I can only get a ball, I can go clear round the ground the first time. Do you think they would ask us to join them if we went nearer?" she said; and I replied that I hardly thought they would care to give up that game for the sake of taking us in, while to myself I wondered at her temerity in proposing such a thing.

I did not know her then as well as I did afterward, for though she could tell Godfrey Schuyler that he must not talk to her because she was poor, in her heart she was a born aristocrat, and felt no distinction except the accident of wealth between herself and people like the Schuylers. She never forgot that her mother was a lady, and though she had but forty pounds a year and her auntie was a seamstress, she felt no inferiority to any one, and expected kindness and attention from all. It was a little singular that of the four ladies in the lawn she should have singled out Alice Creighton as the subject for remark, and not very complimentary remarks either.

"Why does she wear her hair so high?" she asked, and when I explained that it was the fashion, she answered: "But it is very ugly, and makes her look so queer. Will Mr. Godfrey like that? He said mine was pretty in my neck;" and taking off her white cape sun-bonnet she let her bright, wavy hair fall in masses around her face and down her back.

"You are a little girl," I said, "and Miss Creighton is seventeen, and engaged, I guess."

"Engaged!" she repeated. "That's funny, and she so young. Is it Mr. Godfrey?"

I was stooping to button my boot, and did not answer her, while she forgot to put the question again, and clutching my arm, said in a whisper:

"Look, she is coming here; this way; right toward us."

"Good-evening, Miss Armstrong," Alice said. "I saw you standing here, and got our governess to take my place, while I came to ask if you know of any one who can do fluting nicely, and plain sewing as well. Adams is sick just when I need her most, and I thought you might know of some one."

"I do,—I know,—auntie flutes and sews splendidly," Gertie's voice rang out clear and silvery as a bell, while Alice stared at her superciliously at first; then curiously; and turned to me with a questioning look in her haughty eyes.

I knew Miss Creighton would never forgive me if I introduced her formally to the *protégée* of one who did fluting and plain sewing, so I merely said:

"This is Gertie Westbrooke, my pupil, whose auntie lives at Vine Cottage, and will I dare say be glad of your work."

Gertie bowed, but Alice's head was high as ever, and as she had thrown off her hat she did look funny with that little ball of hair perched on the top of her head. But it was fashionable, and Alice led the fashions in Hampstead, and it was not for me to criticise, though I did mentally compare the two girls, as they stood there side by side, Gertie, with her wealth of auburn hair, on which the setting sunlight fell, her blue eyes opened wide and full of eager interest in the girl who was engaged, her simple gingham frock, her pretty frilled white apron and rather coarse shoes; the whole so different from the ruffled silk, old enough for a woman of twenty-five, the dainty boots of bronze, the profusion of jewelry, the elaborately arranged hair, the small, *retroussé* nose, and the half-shut sleepy eyes which stared so hard at Gertie, as if she were a new species of the animal kingdom never seen before.

"Yes, I heard Godfrey had some new tenants in his house," Alice said; "and I am glad to know the woman can sew and flute. I wonder if she does it well? Did she do this?"

And she put out her hand to lift Gertie's apron for inspection.

But the child took a step backward, and said, with the manner of a duchess:

"Yes, she did this; and she sews very well. You can judge for yourself by trying her."

Alice elevated her eyebrows and nose, and I was almost certain the ball on her head took an upward inclination too, but she said nothing except that she would call to-morrow and see the woman.

"What is her name, did you say?"

I told her Mrs. Rogers; and with a little nod that she understood me, she added:

"You ought to see the way Miss Christine is in. It's too comical for anything, and would amuse me vastly were it not that I, too, feel vexed, and annoyed, and sorry for the girls. It's too bad to have such a stepmother brought home to them, and I do not blame them for feeling aggrieved. I should rebel, too, to have such a woman thrust upon me."

Gertie had stood very quietly listening to Miss Creighton, her eyes growing larger and darker, and the blood mounting to her cheeks and brow, which were crimson, as she burst out:

"It isn't so, Miss Creighton, if by '*such* a woman' you mean something bad. It is not so. Lady Edith is beautiful. I know her. I've seen her. She gave me a shawl and sent me things when I was sick."

Alice, who was or affected to be near-sighted, and carried a glass at her side, raised it to her eyes and inspected this champion of Mrs. Schuyler, saying, with a little laugh:

"Really, I am glad to meet with one of Mrs. Schuyler's acquaintances, and to hear so good an account of her. Pray, do you know her well?"

Gertie understood her meaning, and answered, spiritedly:

"I am not one of her acquaintances. I am nobody but Gertie Westbrooke, but I've seen her many times in the grounds at Oakwood, and when she came to her mother's where we had lodgings, and I know she is good, and pretty, and a lady, and Mr. Godfrey likes her."

"Do you know Godfrey too? Your circle of friends must be quite extended," was Alice's next remark, to which Gertie did not reply.

She was tying on her bonnet, and only gave a quick, angry glance at Miss Creighton as she started to walk away.

"That's a queer little thing," Alice said, as I stood a moment with her. "Rather pretty, too, isn't she, with those blue eyes and that bright hair. How she did flame up though in Mrs. Schuyler's defence! Her account of the lady does not tally with Godfrey's, but then I suppose it was the shawl and the nice things which caught her fancy. Did she say she was a lodger of Mrs. Schuyler's mother? That is something quite new, and worse than the hired companion. Poor Jule and Emma. I really pity them, and they so proud and exclusive."

"Alice, Alice, come, we want you," came floating across the lawn from Julia Schuyler, and with a quick little nod, such as she always gave me, Miss Creighton went back to her companions, leaving me to think of what Gertie had said about lodging with Mrs. Schuyler's mother, and to feel, it may be, inly glad that the Schuylers were to be punished a little for their arrogance and pride.

I did not know Edith then.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MRS. ROGERS GETS WORK.

ERTIE seemed from the first much interested in the young ladies at the Hill, but with the exception of the night when Alice came across the fields to speak to me, she had only seen them at a distance, while they, absorbed as they were in more important matters, had scarcely thought of the occupants of the cottage. Alice's sewing, however, was peremptory, and as her own seamstress did not come back she resolved at last to call on Mrs. Rogers, and drove, with Emma, to the house, where they found Gertie sitting on the low piazza absorbed in a book and making a very striking picture, with her bright hair falling around her face and neck as her blue eyes looked up at the strangers.

"Is your mother at home?" Alice asked; and the child replied:

"She is not my mother, and she is out just now. Can I tell her anything from you?"

"Oh," Alice said, a little impatiently, "that is just my luck. I wanted so much to see her about some plain sewing. Did you say anything to her about it, child?"

"My name is Gertie. Yes, ma'am, I told her, and I think she'd like to do it. She's only gone to the village after some molasses. I am expecting her every minute. Will you wait till she comes?"

Alice glanced at Emma, who nodded her assent, while Gertie brought them chairs, and then resuming her own, took up her book again and partly opened it.

"Pray don't let us disturb you," Alice said. "We can entertain ourselves. What story are you reading?"

"It isn't a story," Gertie replied. "It's Fasquelle, and I'm getting my lesson."

"Fasquelle!" Alice exclaimed, in much surprise. "Are you studying French?"

"Yes, ma'am; and I've most caught up with the class. Miss Armstrong says I am doing famously. I like it so much, only here is some English which I cannot quite put into French. These *en's* and *ne-gueres* bother me. Perhaps you can help me?"

And with the utmost *sang froid* Gertie brought her grammar to Alice, and with her finger indicated the troublesome passage, which Alice rendered for her.

"She is a queer little thing," Alice thought, as she went back to her chair and her lesson, while Emma mentally pronounced her the most beautiful child she had ever seen.

Some such thought flitted through Alice's mind, and when the lesson was gone through, and Gertie closed her book, she began to question her by asking how old she was, and where she had lived, and what Mrs. Rogers was to her if she was not her mother. And Gertie told her all she knew of herself and her father and mother, and that she had a grandmother and forty

pounds a year. And then she spoke of her aunt's loss in the bank shares, and added :

"After that, we couldn't lodge any more, because, you see, we are poor, and so we came to America to seek our fortune and be near Norah, Mrs. Schuyler's maid, who is auntie's cousin, you know."

Here was an opportunity for learning something definite of Edith, and Alice was about to question Gertie when Mrs. Rogers appeared, a jug of molasses in one hand and a basket of eggs in the other. She seemed flurried and surprised at sight of the ladies, and asked Gertie why she had not invited them in.

"We are better here," Alice said. "We only came on business. I am wanting some plain sewing done, and called to see if you can do it for me."

She was civil enough, and Mrs. Rogers, who really wanted work, signified her willingness to do anything she could. Specimens of her handiwork were brought forth for examination, and Alice criticised and offered suggestions with the manner of a woman of forty, and finally arranged to try her, provided the price was not too high. That, too, proved satisfactory, and then the young lady arose to take leave, saying :

"Perhaps you will let your little girl come for the work, to-morrow."

"No, I will go myself," Mrs. Rogers answered quickly, and added, in an undertone : "it is not as if she were my own child, and in my station in life. She is different, and must be brought up different. I mean she shall have the very best of educations. Do you know of any piano I can rent, or of any place where she can go to practise ? I mean her to take lessons at once."

Alice stared wonderingly at her, and answered rather haughtily that she knew nothing about renting pianos, or places where one could practise.

"Such airs !" she said to Emma, as they walked home together. "French and music with clear-starching and plain sewing. That girl will be much better off to be brought up to work than to get such notions into her head."

"Yes, but isn't she pretty ?" Emma said, remembering the

flowing hair, the soft, blue eyes, and the fair, round face more distinctly than she did Fasquelle, and the airs which had so offended Alice.

"Pretty enough. Such people often are when young, but they always degenerate sadly."

"Yes, but she is not like *such* people," Emma rejoined. "Don't you remember what the woman said?"

"Yes, I know. The child has a grandmother and forty pounds a year, but for all that I reckon she is about like Mrs. Rogers, and would much better be learning to sew than playing the piano. I wonder if she would not like to practise on your beautiful Steinway."

Alice spoke contemptuously, not from any feeling toward Gertie especially, but from contempt for those of her class who aspired to something better. They had no business to be ambitious; it was their duty to be content in the station where God had placed them. This was her theory, and she continued to dwell upon it even after she reached home, and made a good deal of fun of the girl with forty pounds a year and a grandmother, who had asked her help in French, and was going to take music lessons!

CHAPTER XXV.

THEY COME.

IT was the day after the young ladies' visit to Vine Cottage and the third week since Mrs. Rogers' arrival in town. I had dismissed my school earlier than usual that afternoon, and at Gertie's request, went with her to the Schuyler Cemetery. She had heard that Mr. and Mrs. Schuyler and Godfrey were expected every day, and she wanted to have that grave looking real nice, as she was sure Mr. Godfrey would be pleased to find that somebody had cared for it. So it was for Godfrey's sake that she weeded, and dug, and trimmed, and watered, while I sat watching her, and thinking of another

young girl, who, years ago, had laid her face in the grass and wept for the dead beneath it.

Where was she now? Dead, perhaps, and gone to the lover lost so early; or it might be that she was married and had forgotten that far-off grave, which she had bidden me keep till she came back again. I had neglected it of late, but my work was taken from my hands by little Gertie Westbrooke, who had made a miniature garden of the spot, and brought to light and life the flowers I had put there in the summers past and gone. There were clumps of white daisies and blue forget-me-nots, and the sweet English violet, with other hardy roots which bear our northern winters, while the rose brought from Vine Cottage yard had wound itself round the tall monument, and was reaching out its arms toward the evergreen which grew near by. There were some violets in blossom now, while, better than all there was a clump of buds upon the rose tree, the summer's second growth, and Gertie plucked two of them, and gathered some white daisies and blue forget-me-nots, and sitting down upon the grass she made them into a tiny bouquet, with sweet-brier for a background of green, and told me she was going to carry them home and keep them in her room.

I had shown her the little vase which Heloise Fordham left with me, and she had filled it with flowers that afternoon and brought it to the grave, where, just under the shadow of the rose, it stood a sweet offering to the memory of the dead, who, far away in the other world, knew, perhaps, whose feet were treading the sod above him, and whose the little hands so busy with his grave.

How pretty my darling was that afternoon, with the flush on her face and the sparkle in her eyes, as, with the bouquet in her hands, she walked with me back to the cottage, where I was going to help her a little in her French; and how gayly she chattered, sometimes about herself and what she meant to be, and then of the young ladies from the Hill who had called at the cottage the day before.

"I don't think Miss Creighton very pretty," she said, "though she looks just like the pictures in the fashion books. Miss

Emina is handsomer than she, but neither are half as handsome as Mrs. Schuyler."

"I believe you think Mrs. Schuyler very pretty," I said, and she replied:

"Pretty, I guess she is! She is beautiful,—just like a grand duchess."

"How old is she?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't know. How old are you, Miss Armstrong?"

I told her almost twenty-seven, and she exclaimed:

"That is very old! I don't think Mrs. Schuyler can be half as old as that. She looks just like a girl. Oh! oh! oh! there she is! There she is! Look, look, Miss Armstrong, they come! they come!"

We were very near Gertie's home, and the excited child pointed toward an open barouche which had turned the corner and was just opposite the cottage. I recognized Colonel Schuyler at once, but not for an instant did my gaze rest on him; it wandered to the lady at his side, the peerless creature whose fine-cut face, framed in masses of golden-brown hair, was white and pure as a water-lily, and whose dark eyes scanned eagerly the cottage and its surroundings, and then rested upon Gertie and myself with a curious, wondering look.

"I mean to throw her this as a welcome," Gertie cried, and the bouquet gathered from Abelard's grave went whirling through the air, and fell directly in Edith's lap, while Gertie snatched her bonnet from her head and shook it toward the carriage, her hair falling in rippling waves around her shoulders, and her face radiant with joy.

How the lady's eyes gleamed, while the expression of her face and the wondrous smile which wreathed her lips and showed her white, even teeth, I never shall forget. She held the bouquet in her hand, and we heard her distinctly utter the word "thanks," as the carriage went rapidly by. Twice she looked back, the same smile on her face and the same pleased look in her eye, as Gertie kissed the tips of her fingers and threw them toward her.

"Isn't she beautiful?" Gertie asked.

"Yes, very beautiful, I replied," as I stood looking after her, and wondering at the opinion so different held of her at Schuyler Hill, and wondering, too, what they would think of her when they found what she was like.

Afterward I heard from one and another what they thought, and said, and did, and will narrate in

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOW THEY RECEIVED HER.

N their return from the cottage the previous night, Alice and Emma found that during their absence a telegram had come from Colonel Schuyler, who said he should be home the following day, and asked that the carriage might meet him at the station.

Miss Rossiter, of course, did not sleep a wink, and came down to breakfast looking frightfully haggard and yellow, while Julia was pale and subdued, and Emma showed traces of tears. It was almost as bad as the day of the first Mrs. Schuyler's funeral, and only Mrs. Tiffe and Perry showed any signs of interest in the coming event.

But as the day wore on the girls brightened up, and Alice and the governess made some bouquets for the dinner table, and put one in Godfrey's room, but none in those of the bride. Flowers were not for her, a woman of forty with a squint and a limp and glasses! So they only opened the windows of her rooms and let in the soft air of early September, and Emma cried a little as she looked across the lawn to where her mother slept, and wondered if she knew, or knowing, cared that another was in her place. And then she went to her Aunt Christine and told her it was time to dress, and asked if she was coming down. Miss Rossiter had the headache and lay upon the couch, and said she must be excused. She could not meet the woman that night; she must wait till morning, when she hoped to be stronger and better able to bear it. So Emma dropped the shades and brought the camphor to her aunt and smoothed her

hair a moment, and almost wished she, too, had the headache, and then went to Alice and Julia, who were dressing, and who gave her a meaning look as she entered.

"What, *black* this warm day?" Emma exclaimed, as she saw Julia had chosen a plain black grenadine, which, with the simple white band about her neck, gave her the look of one in mourning.

"Yes, black," Julia replied. "I do not feel like decking myself as for a festival. This is no holiday to us, and Kitty has brought out your plain grenadine for you."

"And I am horrid in black," Emma said, plaintively; but she usually submitted to the stronger will of her sister, and so she donned the black dress which made her look so like a nun that, braving Julia's displeasure, she ventured to tie a bit of lavender ribbon in her hair, and was delighted at the effect.

"Look, isn't it becoming?" she said. "Surely half-mourning is admissible on the occasion of the new mother's advent."

Even Julia admitted that the effect was good, and as she was herself an ardent lover of dress and had adopted her plain garb more from resentment to the living than respect for the dead, she too tried the effect of lavender, and fastened at her throat a pretty bow of ribbon, which brightened her up wonderfully. Alice, who had nothing to resent, and who wished to be as attractive as possible to Godfrey after his long absence, indulged her taste to its fullest extent, and succeeded in getting her hair higher than she had ever gotten it before. Godfrey was of course accustomed to the very latest styles of Parisian hair-dressing, and she did not wish to appear singular to him, she said, when Emma exclaimed:

"Why, Alice, how funny you do look!"

Taken as a whole, she was frightfully and fashionably dressed, and very much pleased with her *tout ensemble*, and certain she should completely overawe and confound the plain woman of forty, who was momentarily expected. The barouche had been sent for the colonel according to his orders, and Godfrey's buggy had been sent for him, as he might bring a friend with him, his telegram said. But Robert Macpherson was not quite ready

to leave New York, and preferred coming to the country a few days later. So Godfrey drove home alone, choosing a shorter road than that taken by the barouche, and reaching the house some ten minutes earlier than his father.

"Oh, girls, girls, there is Godfrey!" Emma cried, as she caught sight of her brother driving up to the rear of the house; and rushing out to meet him she threw her arms around him and burst into tears.

"Why, Emma, you dear little goose," he said, as he bent his tall figure down to kiss her, "what are you crying about? Sorry to get your scamp of a brother back, eh?"

"No, no, Godfrey. I'm so glad to have you, only I dread that woman! Is she so very horrid?"

"Horrid! Who horrid?" Godfrey asked, while every muscle of his face twitched with suppressed mirth. "Do you mean the new mother? You must not mind her looks; beauty is only skin deep, and she is like a singed cat, better than she looks. You are sure to like her. Ah, Julia, my darling, how like a sister of charity you look!" he continued, as he released Emma, and kissing his other sister affectionally, he wound an arm around each of the girls, and walked to the house, where Alice was waiting for him, and scanning him curiously.

"He certainly has improved in looks, and there is quite a foreign air about him, and his clothes are Paris made," she thought, and her spirits rose proportionately as she advanced leisurely to meet him.

"Ah, Mademoiselle Alice," he exclaimed. "*Comment vous portez vous,*" and kissing her loudly on both cheeks he continued: "*Que pensez-vous de cela?* Doesn't it *smack* of foreign travel?"

Alice had not quite expected this, but the French delighted her, though she inly pronounced the accent horrid, and the hearty kisses pleased her, even if they were wet and loud, and she blushed very becomingly, and called him a "dear, naughty boy," and kept hold of his hand until he freed it from her, thinking to himself that she was unusually gushing, and not a whit pretty either.

"By George, Allie," he began, as his eyes rested on her hair. "No, I don't mean that. I've quit slang," he added, with a thought of Gertie Westbrooke; "but, Allie, what *is* that on the top of your head? It looks like the door-knob, and makes me think of that picture of William Tell's boy with the big apple on his head. Got a story above the style this time. Should think you'd take cold in the back of your neck. They don't wear it so in *Par-ee*."

And with his light badinage he demolished Alice's hopes of admiration, and struck a blow at the wonderful structure she had spent so much time in rearing.

"Godfrey, Godfrey," Julia cried in a tremor of distress and agitation as she caught the sound of wheels, and felt that the catastrophe so dreaded was coming at last. "Tell us true, is she so fearfully ugly?"

"She's wonderful, and you may as well bring out your smelling salts and camphor," Godfrey replied; and then grasping Julia by the shoulder and calling to his other sister: "Come, Em, and see the elephant," he led the way to the front door, where Edith stood looking eagerly about her, not limping nor squinting, nor ugly, nor old, but a marvellously beautiful woman, with ease and grace in every motion, and no sign of embarrassment or awkwardness about her.

"There was a flush on her cheek and a glitter in her eyes, but otherwise she was calm and self-possessed when her husband took her hand and led her up the steps to the group of astonished and bewildered girls, who had looked this way and that, and then, under their breath, had ejaculated, hurriedly:

"Why — what — who — oh — oh — Godfrey, *Godfrey*, you WRETCH!"

And that last word embodied Julia's feelings, as, with one glance at her brother, who stood choking with laughter, she went to meet the stranger.

"Julia, my eldest daughter; Mrs. Schuyler, your new mother, and I hope you will love each other," the colonel said.

And then Julia felt her hand taken in one as soft, and small, and perfectly formed as her own, and a sweet voice said, *and*

if to relieve her from any embarrassment respecting the mother :

"We will be sisters, I am sure. Kiss me, Julia."

This was not what the young lady had expected. No thought of kissing had entered her mind. Indeed, she meant to freeze the adventuress by her formality and dignity, and lo, the woman was dictating terms to her, saying they would be sisters and asking for a kiss ! But it was not hard to kiss the smooth, round cheek offered to her, and, when the sweet voice said again, "You will love me, Julia, I am sure, and let me love you," the haughty girl answered involuntarily, "Yes, I will," and then, with a tear actually wetting her eyelashes, stood back to give place to Emma, who, more impulsive than herself, went headlong into the arms which Edith held toward her, and cried like a little child.

Miss Creighton came next, bowing almost to the ground and offering the tips of her fingers to the lady, who received her just as coldly, though with far more ease and graceful breeding perceptible in her manner.

They were in the hall by this time, and Mrs. Tiffe stood waiting to greet her new mistress, her black silk rustling at every step and her yellow lace showing age and cost, as with her gold-bowed glasses in her hand and her bunch of keys jingling suggestively on the chain at her side, she paid her respects to madame, and thought as she did so how she would like to thrash the scapegrace, Godfrey, who had so misled them. He was choking with laughter just outside the door, where his sisters were going through with a pantomime of threatening gestures for the trick played upon them.

"Godfrey Schuyler, how could you ?" Julia began in a whisper, while Godfrey suddenly remembering that he had not seen his Aunt Christine, stepped back into the hall and asked where she was.

On being told she had a headache, he said :

"I must go up and see her," and with a sign for Julia and Alice to follow, he ran up the stairs in the direction of Miss Rossiter's room.

But Emma was there before them. As soon as the first moment of amazement was over she had gone swiftly to her aunt's chamber, and rushing in unannounced, had exclaimed :

"Oh, Aunt Christine, she is the most beautiful woman you ever looked upon. It was all a fib he wrote us. She is splendid and hasn't a bit of a limp nor anything, and looks about twenty. Do get up, auntie, and go to dinner."

Miss Rossiter was amazed, and sitting up on the side of her bed, was trying to knot her long black hair under her net, while she put some questions to Emma, when the door burst open a second time, and Godfrey himself came in full of life, and health, and vigor, and by his very presence doing more to dissipate the lady's headache than all the drugs in her closet.

"Hallo, Aunt Christine," he said ; "done up in camphor and herbs, as usual ? Let's try what a little exercise will do for you."

And taking her in his arms he waltzed gayly about the room, the girls laughing and the lady protesting and struggling to get free, until she had danced her hair down and a bright color into her face,

"There, auntie, you are real handsome now," Godfrey said, as he released her with a hearty kiss, and leading her to the couch, seated himself beside her, with his arm around her waist. "Now, girls, pitch in ; I'm ready for you," he said ; as they began to accuse him of deceit in its most aggravating form, asking how he could do it.

"Do what ?" he asked. "What are you making such a fuss about ?"

"I should think you'd ask," Julia replied. "Telling us she was forty and had a glass eye, and a squawk in her voice, and everything else that is bad."

"I never told you any such thing," Godfrey answered, with great gravity ; and the three girls exclaimed, in chorus :

"Oh, Godfrey Schuyler ! You did, you did. We have the letter. You wrote, 'Think of father's marrying a woman of forty with a glass eye, and——'"

"Oh, yes, well, of course, that's a different thing," Godfrey

replied. "I did tell you to *think of it*, I know, and you evidently have thought of it, and had a good time at it, but I never said it was so. I told you 'she would take your breath away when you saw her,' and she did. You all three opened your eyes and mouths and stared at her as if you never saw a handsome woman before. And she is handsome, isn't she? Now, confess it, girls; and say she is the loveliest creature you ever saw——"

"Oh, Godfrey, I do believe you are half in love with her yourself," Alice said, a little reproachfully, and the young man replied:

"To be sure I am; and if she had been younger there's no telling what I might have done, but when I subtracted eighteen from twenty-eight, I said to myself, 'that will never do; a man may not marry his grandmother;' and then, Alice, I knew there was a little pug nose over the sea, which would get very red and ugly looking if I did that," he added, mischievously, as he saw the disturbed look on Alice's face, and knew why it was there.

"Is she twenty-eight? She does not look it," Emma said, while Julia and Alice declared she did; and then as women, especially envious ones, will do, they picked her to pieces, from her head to her feet, and putting her together again, decided that though they had seen much finer faces and prettier, too, her *tout ensemble* was very good, and they were so much relieved, as they had expected something horrid, of which even the villagers would make fun.

"Wait till you see her in her dinner dress," Godfrey said. "I tell you her gowns are elegant, Paris made, too. I've seen them. I know. I've travelled." (This with a wink at Alice.) "And that reminds me, Jule and Em, why are you rigged out in black, this warm, pleasant day? You look as if you were in mourning. I believe you did it on purpose too, but I tell you she is stunning in her dinner costumes, and if you don't wish to be thrown quite in the shade, I'd take off those black things, and put on something fluffy and light and airy and becoming; and you, auntie, certainly do not mean to stay mewed up here

on toast and oatmeal, while we are at dinner. Take a big drink from every bottle in the closet, and if that don't do, try some of your lightning. I'll fix the battery ; and then dress yourself and go down, and look handsome and bright. Why, I think you've grown pretty and young while I was gone, and I want that beauty to see that all the good looks are not on her side. The Schuylers have some of it. Come, girls, hurry up."

They could not withstand Godfrey, especially when he mingled a little seasonable flattery with his persuasions, and both Julia and Emma went to their rooms to change their dress, while Miss Rossiter expressed her willingness to go down if she could be ready in time.

"I'll help you. I can do it first rate," Godfrey said, mischievously, but Miss Rossiter declined his services, and ringing for Kitty, sent him from the room, telling him he might as well attend to his own toilet.

"That's a fact," he said. "But my dressing won't take long. Come, Alice, let's go out on the balcony awhile ;" and leading Miss Creighton to the glass door at the end of the hall, he brought her a chair and seated her in it. "You won't have to dress, and can talk with me. You've got yourself up stunningly, especially that ball on the top of your head. Couldn't have put that a peg higher if you tried, could you ? I say, Alice, why do you want to make yourself such a fright ? Do you think it is the style ? It isn't. I saw a few shop-girls and bar-maids with their heads tricked out like yours, but not one lady. I believe you would wear a boot-jack if you thought it was the fashion in Paris !"

"Oh, Godfrey, don't, please, and you just come home, too," Alice said, with a tremor in her voice and tears in her eyes.

It hurt her that he should find fault with her personal appearance within an hour of his return after so long an absence, especially as she had taken so much pains to dress for him. Godfrey saw she was hurt, and said to her, coaxingly, as he put his arm around her :

"Never mind, Alice. You are real stylish anyway, and I'm

so glad to see you again. I am, upon my word, and you used to write to me such nice, sisterly letters. Do you find me improved?"

"Yes, Godfrey, ever so much. I knew you would be. Travel always does that," Alice said, her spirits a good deal lightened by his few words of commendation. "And, Godfrey," she continued, "I guess I'll go and fix my hair now. There will be time."

She choked a little, for "fixing her hair" was a vast amount of trouble, but if Godfrey was suited, she did not care.

"Nonsense," he said, tightening the grasp of his arm about her waist, "your hair is well enough for once. Stay with me and let's talk. Only think how long it is since you had a chance to lecture me except by letter, which does not go for much, and I'm real glad to see you, Allie. I am, by Jo——. No, I mean I am, Allie; I am trying to quit my slang, though it is like pulling teeth sometimes."

"Yes, Godfrey," and folding her small, fat hands on her lap, Alice looked happy, and content, and satisfied. "Yes, Godfrey, I knew that trip abroad would effect great things for you."

"Oh, bother, Allie, it isn't that. I heard just as much slang, and saw just as many clowns, and snobs, and fools abroad as I ever saw here; and more too. Travel didn't improve my mind or manners; it was a little girl. Oh! don't look so disturbed," he added, as Alice bridled at the mention of a girl. "You needn't be jealous at all. She isn't bigger than my thumb, and is only twelve years old. She was on the ship with us and awful sick, and so was I. I tell you what, I have been down to the very depths and felt deep calling unto deep in a way I never wish to hear it call again. Ugh! the very thought of that cold creep which begins at the toes and ends in the spittoon makes me dizzy; and with a swaying motion Godfrey rocked from side to side until his head rested on Alice's shoulder.

But she moved away from him with dignified propriety, saying:

"Yes, I know, I have been sea-sick too; it is dreadful; but what of the little girl, and who was she?"

"Oh, yes, I was telling you about her. She had been sick, and was sitting on deck, all wrapped up in shawls and blankets, and looking so like some pure white pond-lily, that I kissed her right on the mouth!"

"Godfrey!" Alice exclaimed, indignantly; while he rejoined:

"You are not half as angry as she was. I never saw anything like the gleam in her blue eyes. Had I really insulted her she could not have taken it worse than she did, or reproached me more sharply. I never heard anything like the way she talked to me. Why, I felt as ashamed as a dog, and when she attacked my slang, as she called my free style of talk, I promised her I would break myself of it and try to come up to her idea of a gentleman."

"Her idea," Alice said. "Who was she, pray, that she should presume to lecture you?"

"I tell you, there's no need to be jealous," Godfrey replied. "Not of her, at least. She is only a child,—not in 'our set,'—no pretension,—no family,—though I believe she does boast a grandmother and forty pounds a year."

"Oh, I know,—Gertie Rogers, that yellow-haired girl down at the cottage!" Alice exclaimed, with a tone of irritation in her voice.

"And so you have seen Gertie. Isn't she a beauty?" Godfrey said.

Before Alice could reply there was the rustle of a dress and the sound of voices and footsteps on the stairs. The colonel and Edith were coming down, and they went into the drawing-room, where Godfrey and Alice joined them, the latter scanning the bride curiously, and mentally acknowledging her to be the most elegant woman she had ever seen, both in face, and manner, and dress. How exquisitely beautiful Edith was in the grayish silk, with the pink tinge, which fitted her fine form as only a Paris-made garment can fit. The silk was of the richest texture, while the lace upon it was in itself a fortune, and the bertha was the most exquisite thing of the kind Alice had ever seen.

"How can she be so easy and self-possessed, and she only a hired companion?" Alice thought, as she saw how wholly un-

embarrassed Edith was, even when Mrs. Rossiter swept into the room in her long trailing dress of black tissue, with her scarlet scarf around her, and a few geranium leaves in her hair.

Miss Rossiter usually wore black when in full dinner dress. She knew it became her better than any other color, especially when relieved with scarlet or white, and she was handsome now as she came in with a half-eager, half-wondering look upon her face.

"Ah, Christine, I am glad to see you and find you looking so well," Col. Schuyler said, as he went hastily forward to meet her. "Let me present you to my wife. Mrs. Schuyler, this is Miss Rossiter, my sister,—or rather,—yes,—the sister of my wife; that is, I mean,—the late lamented Emily,—yes."

"That's what I call a very remarkable introduction," Godfrey whispered to Alice, who turned away to hide her laughter, while the faintest resemblance of a smile lurked in Edith's eyes and about the corners of her mouth as she extended her hand to the sister of the lamented Emily!

Otherwise she was perfectly collected, and did not seem to notice that only the tips of two fingers were given her, and that though the thin lips of Miss Rossiter moved, the words they uttered were wholly inaudible. Miss Rossiter had seen at a glance that the lady's beauty was not exaggerated, but she could not feel altogether cordial toward one whom she considered an intruder, and she purposely threw as much coldness and haughtiness as possible into her manner, hoping thus to impress the stranger with a sense of the vast difference there was between the Rossiters and the Lyles. But Edith did not seem in the least affected by the lady's hauteur, and inquiring kindly if her head was better, suggested that she sit down, as she must feel rather weak, and set the example by sitting down herself.

"If she is not assuming the *rôle* of mistress and patronizing me so soon," was Miss Rossiter's mental comment, and resolving not to be patronized she remained standing as straight as an arrow and almost as stiff, talking to her brother-in-law until the bell rang for dinner, and Julia and Emma came in, dressed in

white and looking infinitely better than when Godfrey criticised them so severely.

The dining-room at Schuyler Hill was one of the pleasantest rooms in the house, and it looked beautifully now with its glass and silver and flowers, and Edith felt a pardonable glow of pride and satisfaction in the thought that this pleasant home, with all its luxury, was hers, the gift of the man who led her so proudly to her seat at the head of his table, and pressing her hand as he relinquished it and went back to his post of honor as master of the house. The colonel, who was inclined to be a little stiff in his manners among strangers, appeared well at home and especially well at his own table, and Edith, as she looked at him presiding with so much dignity and ease, thought what a handsome gentleman he was, and felt herself blessed in the possession of him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AFTER DINNER.

THEY had some music, Alice and Julia playing a duet, and then the latter sang and Godfrey turned the leaves for her and thought how dreadfully she screeched, and longed for her to finish and let Edith take her place. But Edith could not sing that night. There were too many memories of the past crowding into her mind, and at the very thought of singing she felt the iron hand touch her throat as if in warning.

"Thank you, Godfrey; some other time I shall be glad to sing, but not to-night. I am too tired, and if I may be excused, I will go to my room very soon," she said, in reply to Godfrey's urgent solicitation for a song.

She was very pale, and her husband came to her aid and said :

"Yes, Godfrey, Mrs. Schuyler must be excused; she is very weary, I see, and needs to rest. Shall I take you upstairs?"

He turned to Edith as he said the last words, and offering

her his arm led her from the room, saying as he bade the ladies good-night that he should not return again that evening, as he had some letters and papers to look over in his reading room. Thus left to themselves the young people were free to talk, and Godfrey threw down the gauntlet by asking his aunt what she thought of his new mother.

"Isn't she splendid?" he said. "And did you ever see a finer form than hers?"

"She is much better than I expected, and I am glad for the sake of my sister's memory; had she been at all like your wicked insinuations I certainly should have died with grief."

And then there followed another criticism upon Edith's face, and form, and manners, and style, and antecedents,—the critics lingering longest over the latter, and insisting that Godfrey should be truthful and tell them what he knew. But Godfrey didn't know anything except that she had once been a governess and was afterward the companion of their Aunt Sinclair, who esteemed her highly and was anxious for the match.

"Has she no relatives? Who are the Lyles?" Julia asked, and Godfrey answered:

"I don't know who the Lyles are, I am sure. Her mother has been married twice, and is now a Mrs. Barrett, who takes lodgers in London,—a highly respectable looking woman, with puffs of gray hair. She is not at all like her daughter, and I don't believe father fancied her much. That's all I know; but I'll tell you where you can get any information you wish concerning your step-grandmother. That Mrs. Rogers at the cottage,—my tenant, you know,—lodged with her for some months. Cultivate her a spell if you are anxious about Mrs. Schuyler's pedigree."

"Oh, yes," Alice said; "we have cultivated her, and she is to do some plain sewing for me. Emma and I went down there yesterday and waited till she came home with a jug of molasses in one hand and a basket of eggs in the other; and that red-haired girl, her daughter, asked me to render some English into French for her. The idea of such people studying French! Girls, Godfrey thinks she's a beauty; and don't

you believe, she presumed to lecture him for slang on the ship, and he kissed her!"

"Kissed whom,—Mrs. Rogers?" Julia asked in dismay, while Alice replied :

"No, the daughter, Gertie Rogers—the girl I told you about when I came home last night. She wears her hair down her back, and braids it up in tags at night and lets it out in the morning, to give it that wavy, rippling appearance."

"No, she doesn't!" Godfrey exclaimed. "It's a natural wave. I'll swear to that; for I saw her once brought on deck early in the morning, as sick as she could be, and I tell you it was just the same; and it is not red, either,—it is a beautiful auburn, with a shade of gold in it; and, as father says, she has the most remarkable face, for a child, that I ever saw."

"Really, Godfrey, you are quite her champion. You'll want us to invite her here next," Julia said, while Emma ventured to remark :

"Anyway, she is beautiful; and do you know, I think there is a look in her face or eyes like Mrs. Schuyler. I thought of it to-night when we were at dinner."

"That's it!" Godfrey exclaimed. "I've tried and tried to think who Gertie was like. It's Edith. There's a resemblance; only Gertie will be the handsomer of the two when she is grown."

"My dears," Miss Rossiter began, in the tone she always assumed when displeased or grieved; "it seems to me your conversation is not very elevating. What possible interest can you feel in those people at the cottage? There can be nothing in common between us, even if they have the furniture of your poor mother's room. Godfrey, I was very much hurt when you wrote Perry to take dear Emily's bedstead and bureau down there. Suppose they were old, they were very dear to me, and I would gladly have had them in my room. The bedstead is much handsomer than the one I'm sleeping on now, and should be sacred to us because your mother and my sister died on it."

Miss Rossiter's handkerchief was at her eyes, and her voice

trembled as she spoke. But Godfrey did not reply at once and when he did, he said :

"I did not suppose you'd care to have that bedstead in your room, or you should have had it. Perhaps I can manage it yet."

"No, no, I beg ; let it be as it is. I can bear it," Miss Rossiter said, with the air of a martyr, while all the time she knew that no amount of money could induce her to sleep on a bed where she had seen a person die.

She would not confess that she was superstitious, but she was, and until this moment, when the desire to find fault with something was strong within her, it had never occurred to her that she wanted the furniture for her own use. She merely did not wish it removed for her sister's successor. If it had been good enough for a Rossiter it surely was good enough for Edith Lyle, and in addition to all this, it hurt her to know that common people like Mrs. Rogers and her daughter were to stretch their democratic bodies on a bed where Emily's aristocratic limbs had once reposed. With her handkerchief to her eyes there fell a chill on the spirits of the young people, who sat silent until Godfrey said, suddenly :

"By the way, girls, I've not told you a word about Bob Macpherson, the artist. I meant to bring him up with me, but he was so much absorbed in the galleries and studios that he decided to wait a little. You are sure to like him."

"Where did you pick him up?" Julia asked ; and Godfrey replied :

"In Rome. I wrote about it at the time. He is an artist from pure love of it rather than necessity, for he has money enough and comes of a good Scotch family."

"Didn't you write us there was a title in it?" Julia asked.

"Yes ; but several removes from Bob, though. I fancied that his father married beneath him, for Bob never says a word about his friends on the maternal side. He went to see them, though, up in Scotland somewhere, and when he came to Oakwood he was awful blue and silent for days, and doubtful about coming to America, but he got over that. He wants to paint

some of our American views, and surely he could not select a better point on the Hudson than Hampstead. I hope he will come soon. I'm lost without him."

What Godfrey liked he liked heartily, and he went on lauding Robert Macpherson until his hearers grew tired of it and asked him to talk of something else.

Meantime Edith had gone to her room, where her husband left her while he looked over the letters and documents which had been accumulating for a week or more. As he went out Norah came in to attend her mistress.

"Get me my dressing-gown and brushes, and then you can go. I shall not need you any more. I am going to sit up awhile," Edith said; and after her maid was gone she arose, and walking to the long mirror, stood looking at the image it revealed of a beautiful lady, clad in heavy silk, with jewels on neck and arms and in her shining hair.

And then her thoughts went backward to the time, years before, when a strange vision had come to her, of herself as she was now clad in costly array, and the mistress of Schuyler Hill. Then her heart had been breaking with a sense of desolation and dread; now it was swelling with pride and happiness, even though that happiness was mingled with regret when she remembered the past and the dead youth whose grave was just across the lawn where the monument was showing so plainly in the moonlight.

And yet she was very happy, and had been so ever since her feet touched the soil of America. She had seen everything in New York which was worth seeing at that season of the year,—had driven with her husband and with Godfrey and with Robert Macpherson in the park, and had been pointed out as the handsomest woman there. She had shopped at Arnold's and Stewart's and Tiffany's, and lunched at Delmonico's, and dined at Mr. Calvert's, and stood on the very spot her feet had touched that day when Abelard was made her husband. But no one had suspected her in the least, and Mrs. Calvert, who was a good-natured little woman, had accepted her in good faith as an entire stranger to America and its ways, and patronized her accordingly.

And it was just here that Edith's conscience gave her a great deal of trouble. When the Calverts and her husband and Godfrey talked to her of America as of a place wholly new to her, she felt herself a miserable impostor, and there was at first a dull pain in her heart as she thought of living on and on with this hidden secret, as she had made up her mind to do.

But gradually this feeling began to give way, and when at last she left New York and started for her country home, she was very happy, even though there was underlying her happiness a feeling of unrest, a feverish desire to see the cottage once more and the grave on the hill, where the evergreens were growing.

How different was this arrival at Hampstead from what the first had been. Then Abelard had stood upon the platform in his working dress, for he had not had time to change it, and with her mother she had walked up the long hill and round through Mountain Avenue to the cottage which was to be their home. Now in place of Abelard, a liveried coachman stood waiting for her, while another servant in livery handed her to the carriage, and both bowed respectfully when their master said :

"The air is so pure and the day so fine I think we will take the longest route home, and drive through Mountain Avenue."

That was the road which led straight by the cottage door, and Edith's heart had beaten rapidly as they drew near the turn in the street which would bring the cottage in view, and when at last she saw it, the blood surged swiftly through her heart, and her hands were clasped tightly together as she looked eagerly at what had once been her home. It was not greatly changed, except that it had recently been repainted, while the creeper, which when she lived there had just commenced fastening its little fibrous fingers to the clapboards, now covered two sides of it entirely, and made its present name, Vine Cottage, very appropriate.

There was her old room, and the window was open just as it used to be, and the honeysuckle was framed around it, and an open book was lying in it, together with a child's work-box. It had had an occupant then, and who, she asked herself, forgetting

Mary Rogers, until her eye caught sight of Gertie Westbrooke, whose bouquet of daisies and forget-me-nots fell directly in her lap and seemed a welcome to her. Then she remembered having heard from Godfrey that Mrs. Rogers was to be his tenant, and she knew this child with the bright flowing hair and eager face must be the same whose "God bless you" had been the only "God bless you" given her at her bridal.

"It is very strange," she thought, "that this little unknown child should always cross my path with flowers and blessings and welcomes;" and she turned her head to look again at the two figures gazing after her.

If a thought that the elder of the two was Ettie Armstrong crossed her mind, I cannot tell. Probably not, as she was thinking of the cottage and the child and the bouquet, which she put in water as soon as the meeting with her husband's family was over, and she was alone with Norah in her room, and as she turned from the window and saw them she unlocked a square ebony box, which her maid, in unpacking, had taken from her trunk. Inside this was another box, a little old-fashioned thing of painted wood, with Chinese figures on it. Abelard had bought it for her on Sixth Avenue, and she had made it a receptacle for her first wedding ring, and a lock of Abelard's hair and the blood-stained rose which had been found next to his heart and brought her by Phebe Young. There, too, as a safe repository, she had put Gertie's first bouquet, with the "God bless you" in it, and there she now put the second one, her welcome to Hampstead. Why she put these flowers with the sacred mementoes of Abelard she did not know, nor did she question her motive, but said to herself, "I must make that little girl's acquaintance;" and then, donning her white dressing-gown she went to the window, from which a view of the cottage could be had, with the moonlight falling on it, just as it used to fall years ago when she was a poor obscure girl, with no thought that she should one day stand as she was standing now, the mistress of Schuyler Hill, with every possible luxury at her command. And there, too, in her old room was the glimmer of a lamp, and a little figure moved occasionally before the open window,

Gertie, most probably, preparing for bed, for after a little the light disappeared, and Edith found herself wondering if the child was kneeling by her bedside and saying her prayer.

"Yes, I am sure she is praying," she thought, "and perhaps she prays for me. I wish she would, for unless she does there is no one to pray for me now in all the wide, wide world."

Oh! how unspeakably terrible was that thought: "Nobody to pray for me in all the wide, wide world."

She had lost faith in her mother's prayers, and, as a consequence, her own heart and feelings had insensibly grown harder. But they were softening now, and as she stood looking into the moonlight, she clasped her hands involuntarily, and whispered to herself:

"Oh, Father in heaven, help me from this hour to be a better woman than ever I've been before."

There was a step behind her, and in a moment her husband's arm stole round her waist, and her husband's voice said, as playfully as Colonel Schuyler could say:

"Ah! Edith, my darling, moon-gazing, are you? What do you think of the view, and your new home, and can you be happy in it with me?"

Colonel Schuyler's love and admiration for his wife had been steadily increasing ever since the morning when he first called her his own, and if there had been in his mind a lingering doubt as to the wisdom of his choice, it had been dispelled by the sight of her in her evening dress, sitting at his table, and performing her duties so gracefully and in a quiet, matter-of-course way, as if she had sat there all her life, with that array of silver, and cut glass, and flowers before her.

How fair, and self-possessed, and lady-like she was, and how the pink coral and the soft lace trimmings of her gray dress became her, and how proud he was of her, as he watched her in the drawing-room, talking to his daughters and Miss Creighton, who, compared with her, lost fearfully in the balance of beauty, and grace, and culture.

Usually in the olden days, when Emily trailed her silken robes over the costly carpets, or reclined in her easy-chair, or

reposed upon the couch, he had found the atmosphere of the parlors a little tiresome, and had seized the earliest opportunity for stealing away to his private room. But now it was different, and only the knowing that his letters must be read had availed to take him from Edith's side ; and even while he sat reading them his thoughts were with her continually, and hurrying through them as soon as possible he joined her as we have seen. Pausing a moment in the door he looked admiringly at her as she stood in the deep window with her white dressing-gown falling in graceful folds around her, and her brown hair rippling over her shoulders. She was beautiful, and she was his, and he loved her, and fain would know if she was happy, so he asked her the question, "What do you think of your new home, and can you be happy in it with me ?"

"Yes, Howard, very happy ;" and Edith's hand stole into his, and her fair head drooped upon his shoulder as she continued : "It is a beautiful place, and I am glad you brought me to it, that when you came in just now and surprised me as you did, I was thanking God for it, and asking Him to make me worthy of it. Howard, do you ever pray ?"

It was a singular question, and it sent the hot blood quickly to Colonel Schuyler's face, while a feeling of shame and remorse took possession of him. Years ago he had with other young men of his age been confirmed as a matter of course, and because it was the right thing to do, but he had never reaped any benefits from the confirmation, or given heed to that without which the laying on of hands is of no avail. When Emily died, and he saw what religion could do for her, he set about trying to work out his salvation himself, and by acts alone. Every feast and fast day was for a time observed, while he gave largely to the church and the poor, and insisted that his daughter should be confirmed, and expressed a wish that Godfrey would do so, too. But Godfrey answered "No." He was not going to renounce the world, the flesh and the devil, he said, when he liked them first-rate, and should lie if he said he didn't ! So Godfrey was given up, but the colonel saw his daughters confirmed, and encouraged them in their Sunday-school teaching,

and never allowed them to read light literature on Sunday if he knew it. He asked a blessing at the table, the shortest he could find ; kept the Sabbath day strictly, so far as dinners, and drives, and company were concerned : but there was nothing real about it, nothing which in the other world would have weighed a straw with Him through whom alone we go to God, and when Edith startled him with the question, "Do you ever pray?" he answered her truthfully, "Not often, no."

"Then let us begin now," and Edith held his hand in both hers. "I've never prayed either as I ought, but I've been thinking about it, and I've so much to be thankful for, and need help so much to make me what I should be. Let us begin to gether, to-night."

He could not resist her, and there in the moonlight, with their faces toward Emily's grave and Abelard's, they knelt down side by side ; and though the Lord's Prayer was all they said, it was praying just the same, and God heard and blessed them, for He knew the wish there was in their hearts, and sent to Edith at least the peace she so desired. And so, with a great happiness and feeling of rest and quiet in her heart, she laid her head upon her pillow, and sleep fell softly upon her in her new home at Schuyler Hill.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ONE DAY IN HAMPSTEAD.

EDITH was very sweet and beautiful in her white cambric dress when she descended to the breakfast-room next morning, and took her seat at the table. Miss Rossiter was not present. She had not slept at all for thinking of poor Emily, she said, and was suffering from the combined effects of brandy and morphine and headache, and had her coffee in her room, and felt as if she was resenting something, she hardly knew what, and that if ever there was a martyr she was one now.

The young ladies, however, were all present, and looking very bright and cheerful as they bade Edith good-morning. Alice's hair had gone down a story or two, and was arranged as nearly as possible like Mrs. Schuyler's. Indeed, Miss Alice had risen a full hour earlier than her usual custom in order to try her talent for hair-dressing, and had succeeded so well that Godfrey, for whom the sacrifice was made, called her a nice little puss, after all, and tolerably good-looking, too. And Alice felt complimented and thought Godfrey very handsome, and buttered his cakes for him and seemed altogether like a woman of twenty-five, who had been engaged for years.

"Well, girls, what are you going to do to pass the time between this and dinner?" Godfrey asked, as he rose from the table.

"I must go and see about the sewing I gave to Rogers, and you can go too and see your beauty if you like," Alice said, and with a comical look Godfrey repeated:

"Rogers,—Rogers? Who is he?"

"Why, your tenant,—the woman who lives in your cottage. She is doing some work for me," Alice replied, and Godfrey rejoined:

"Oh, *oui, je vous comprends*. It's the height of good breeding to call your inferiors by their last names; so then, *Creighton*, let's go and see *Rogers*!" and with a tremendous shake of his pants, Godfrey took his soft hat and bamboo cane from the hall rack, and started with Alice for the cottage.

It was Saturday, and as there was no school, Gertie was working in the garden with a big sun-hat tied under her chin, her hair falling down her back, her cheeks very red and her hands very much soiled with dirt. It was a bother to wear gloves, she thought, and she was tugging away at a tuft of pinks when she heard the gate, and looking up saw Alice and Godfrey coming up the walk. Quickly dropping her pinks she went forward to meet them, her eyes shining like stars as she said to Godfrey:

"Oh, Mr. Godfrey, I am so glad to see you. I did not know you had come. Excuse me from shaking hands. I can't,

you see ;" and she held up her little soiled hands which looked white and pretty even with the dirt upon them.

"Upon my word, I never saw such assurance. Why, she acts as if she was fully his equal," Alice thought, as with great dignity she asked :

"Is your mother in? I came to see her about the work I sent her last night."

Mrs. Rogers was in, and while Miss Creighton gave her minute directions as to the precise number and size of the tucks and ruffles and puffs, Gertie entertained Godfrey outside by telling him all about herself since coming to Hampstead. She was going to school to Miss Armstrong, whom she liked so much, and she was studying French, and had caught up with the class already, and Miss Armstrong said her accent was very pure.

"You see I took lessons six months in London of a native, and that makes a difference," she said ; "and, oh, Mr. Godfrey, do you know where we can rent a piano, I want one so much so as to commence my music. You know I am to be a teacher like Miss Armstrong, and take care of auntie when she is old."

Godfrey promised to make inquiries for a piano, and then suddenly recollecting himself, exclaimed :

"Why, there is that old one of mother's at home, a rattle-trap of a thing, which all the Rossiters must have thrummed since the flood. You can have that if it will answer."

Gertie did not think it would. She had no fancy for a "rattle-trap which all the dead Rossiters had thrummed ;" she preferred an instrument which sounded decently, and she said so. and added :

"But we've nowhere to put one yet. Oh, Mr. Godfrey, what made anybody send that tall bedstead and bureau down here, where they won't stand up in any of our sleeping-rooms? We had to put the bureau in the parlor, and the bedstead is still in the woodshed. I wish somebody would take it away. I think it is awful, so clumsy, and I fell over it this morning and hurt my foot."

Godfrey laughed aloud, not at Gertie, but at what Miss Ros

sister would say could she hear this little plebeian denounce that bedstead as awful and clumsy, and wish it away even from the woodshed! Miss Rossiter had been greatly wounded on account of that bedstead; Miss Rossiter had cried because it was sent to the cottage; she had expressed a wish to have it for her own, and her wish should be gratified.

"It was absurd to send that tall furniture to these low rooms," Godfrey said, "and I'll see that it is taken away; to-day, perhaps. Did it hurt your foot very much?"

"Oh no, not much; it was this one," and Gertie stuck up her little foot, which even in the half-worn boot looked so small and pretty that Godfrey felt a desire to squeeze it in his hand.

But Miss Creighton was coming out, and he straightened himself up and nibbled quite unconcernedly at the end of his cane, while Alice gave a few last directions with regard to her plain sewing.

"Good-by, Gertie," Godfrey said. "I'll send for the bedstead and inquire about the piano, and I have not used a single slang word this morning, have I? I shall be a perfect gentleman very soon, and then——" he kissed his hand to her, and looking back Alice saw a hot flush on the face of the child, who knew as well as Godfrey to what he alluded.

"What do you mean by being so familiar with such people?" Alice asked. "It cannot do them any good. On the contrary, it is a positive harm. Why, Rogers is so airy now I can hardly talk with her."

"Allie, if you want me to like you, don't be a fool," Godfrey said, sharply. "I don't wonder the woman was what you call *airy*, which means that she stood for her rights. I heard you call her 'Rogers' to her face. Now that is simply absurd for Americans. In England it is more common and means nothing; but here, where there is no aristocracy of blood, and the son of the hod-carrier may rise to be President, it is ridiculous, and savors wonderfully of snobbishness and parvenuism. If this woman has a handle to her name, give it to her, and not call her 'Rogers.' It is low, and not a bit ladylike, and you,

as Alice Creighton, can certainly afford to be a lady without taking the trouble to impress others with your rank."

Godfrey was very much in earnest, and Alice was crying, and so the walk home was a most uncomfortable one, until they reached the entrance to the grounds, where Godfrey stopped, and putting his hand playfully on his companion's shoulder, said :

"Come, Allie, don't let's quarrel. You are a nice little thing and I like you first-rate, and want you to be a lady everywhere, and have a kind, courteous word for everybody ; Mrs. Schuyler has, and she——"

"Mrs. Schuyler, indeed ! As if I am to take her for a pattern, and she a governess !" Alice said hotly, as she walked rapidly on toward the house.

"Whe-w !" Godfrey whistled after her as he followed leisurely, wondering why girls need to make such confounded fools of themselves, and half wishing he had held his tongue and not tried to lecture Alice.

As he drew near the house he saw John, the coachman, bringing up the pony phaeton, and asked who was going out.

"Miss Rossiter is going up to the Ridge House after lunch, and wants to drive herself," said John, and Godfrey thought within himself :

"That's just the thing, and gives me a chance to surprise her. Won't it be a capital joke ?"

Entering the house he went in quest of his aunt, who was dressed and feeling much better.

"Mrs. Barton has asked me to come over there some day, and I believe I'll go this afternoon. Home does not seem like home now," she said, with a sigh, which Godfrey knew had reference to the graceful figure walking on the terrace in front of the window, and so did not respond at once.

When he did speak, he said :

"By the way, auntie, were you really in earnest about that bedstead ?"

"What bedstead ?" Miss Rossiter asked quickly, and then recollecting herself, she added : "Certainly I was. It hurt me

cruelly to see it leave the house when Emily thought so much of it. But then I must get accustomed to things of that kind I suppose. New lords, new laws, and new things."

Her manner was the manner of one who has been wounded and thwarted at every point, and Godfrey was strengthened in his resolve, and within half an hour after she had driven away in her pony phaeton he had interviewed both Mrs. Tiffe and Perry, and was riding with John in the long democratic wagon down the road toward the cottage. Mrs. Rogers and Gertie were both in the garden this time, but when Godfrey explained his errand, the former, who was glad to be rid of the cumbrous piece of furniture, went in with John, while Godfrey remained outside with Gertie.

"You must be very fond of gardening," he said, and Gertie replied :

"Yes, I am ; I like it ever so much. Have you seen *the grave* since you came home?"

"Grave! Whose grave?" Godfrey asked, and she replied :

"Mr. Lyle's, the man who saved your life. Miss Armstrong told me all about it, and I felt so glad you were not killed, and so sorry for him and the young girl who liked him. She used to live here in this very house, and Miss Armstrong promised her, when she went away, to keep the grave up nice till she came back, and for a while she did, but the girl didn't come, and Miss Armstrong got to forgetting it, you know, and when she told me about it, it was just awful with weeds and tangled grass. But it looks like a flower-bed now. I thought maybe you would be glad."

Her bright, eager eyes were fixed upon him for his approval, which he gave unqualifiedly.

"He was glad, and to-morrow, after dinner, he would go and see it," he said ; and then as his services were needed for the heavy bureau, he lifted his hat to Gertie, and walked away.

"For pity's sake, what are you doing?" Julia asked of Godfrey, when, after her nap and toilet, she came from her room and found the rear of the hall blockaded with furniture, and

mattress, and bed-clothes, and Godfrey, very red in the face as he assisted Mrs. Tiffe, who was also anxious and excited.

"Cooking some 'potted sprats' I guess, though I'm not quite sure," was Godfrey's reply; and when Julia, who was not very conversant with Mrs. Opie, demanded what he meant, he explained that as Aunt Christine was so grieved about the things sent to the cottage, and expressed herself as so desirous to have them back, especially the bedstead, he had decided to give her a pleasant surprise on her return that night from the Ridge. Won't she be delighted though!" And Godfrey's face was very expressive as he tugged away at the heavy furniture. "There, she is sure to like that," he said, when at last his work was finished, and the old-fashioned, massive bedstead stood in the place the lighter one of oak had occupied, while the bureau was pushed into a corner as the only available spot.

"I am glad you are so well satisfied," Julia said; "but I doubt if you get any thanks for your trouble. Auntie will never sleep a night on that bedstead; she is the biggest coward in the world."

"Then I'll take it down Monday. Anyway, she cannot say I have not tried to please her," was Godfrey's reply, as he walked away, whistling cheerily, and wondering why women were so queer, and always went back on a fellow when he was doing his best.

Meantime Alice had had her pet out in a good cry, which made her nose very red, and did not add at all to the beauty of her face when she came down to dinner, gracious and smiling, and ready to forgive Godfrey, if he wished to be forgiven. But he gave no sign that he did, though he was very polite to her, and peeled her orange, and gave her his bunch of Malaga grapes, because he knew she had a weakness for them, and asked her slyly how she had burned her nose so badly, and suggested a very *small* poultice of flaxseed when she went to bed at night! And Alice laughed, and thought him altogether charming and delightful.

"I mean to show him that I am improving in what he calls snobbishness," she thought, and after dinner was over, she said to him in her most insinuating voice:

"Godfrey, I want to see *Mrs. Rogers* again. I've changed my mind about the tucks. I heard you say you were going to the village, and would you mind walking round that way for me when you come home?"

"Certainly not. I am pleased to go to *Mrs. Rogers*' at any time," he answered, with an emphasis on the *Mrs.*, which showed that he had taken note of the change.

"Pleased to go there at any time! I do believe it, and I wonder if he can be so much interested in that child," Alice thought, as she walked slowly toward the cottage.

She was not jealous. Gertie was too young and too obscure for that; but she was annoyed with Godfrey's evident admiration for the "yellow-haired girl." And still, if she would please him as she really wished to do, she must be interested, too, and after she was through with *Mrs. Rogers* she went out to Gertie, and, wishing to say something to her, asked abruptly if she had ever been confirmed? Alice always felt more seriously inclined on Saturday afternoons than on any other week day. It was near to Sunday, and became one who taught in the Mission school, and gave all sorts of good advice to sundry forlorn, ragged little wretches, among whom Godfrey Schuyler and Schuyler Godfrey and Alice Creighton Vandeusenhisen figured conspicuously. Alice would never have taught in the regular Sunday-school, where she was liable to come in contact with persons who might lay claim to her notice socially. She preferred the Mission school, where she was looked upon as something far above the common order of mortals, and here she was very zealous, and very devout, and very good, and sometimes took Alice Creighton Vandeusenhisen in her lap, and let Tommie Trotter stroke her silk dress with his dirty hands, and once she actually kissed a little girl who brought her a bouquet. To these children, and such as these, she and the Misses Schuyler, who taught there also, were kind of divinities, as was proven by an incident which occurred just before the arrival of Edith at the Hill. There was a new rector at St. Luke's,—a young man fresh from old Trinity in New York,—and he went one Sunday to catechise the little ones at the Mission.

"Now boys," he said to the row of eager faces confronting him so eagerly, "speak up loud and tell me who made the world?"

Instantly Tommie Trotter, with the three Vandeusenhisens, screamed lustily :

"Miss Alice Creighton, sir!" and were answered from a rival crowd :

"Miss Julia Schuyler, sir!" while one faint little voice brought up the rear with :

"I tell you, Tom Trotter, she didn't. 'Twas Miss Emma, sir!"

After that Alice and Julia esteemed themselves as saints, and were more zealous than ever to gather in any stray lambs which had no particular fold. Hence the reason for Alice's attack on Gertie, whom she startled with the question :

"Have you ever been confirmed?"

Gertie had not, and did not particularly care to be just yet, she said ; and Alice was as much shocked and surprised as if the child had been convicted of a crime.

"Not wish to be confirmed and be good ! How shocking !" she exclaimed.

And Gertie replied :

"I did not say I did not wish to be good, for I do ; but I don't want to be confirmed until I am older and understand it better."

"Who is your teacher in Sunday-school?" Alice asked next, with a good deal of severity.

"I don't go to Sunday-school. I get my lesson at home, and recite it with the Collect and the Commandments to Auntie," Gertie said, while Miss Creighton grew more and more amazed.

"Not go to Sunday-school ! I did not suppose there was any one in this town so heathenish as that ! Child, you must go, and, if you do not care to join the school at church, come to the Mission to-morrow at four o'clock. You will find me there, and the Misses Schuyler and several other ladies. Will you come?"

Gertie hesitated a moment, and then asked :

"Has Mr. Godfrey a class?"

"Mr. Godfrey a class! Certainly not. Can't you go unless he is there?" Alice said, sharply, conscious of a sudden feeling which, had Gertie been her equal, would have been jealousy.

Ere Gertie could reply, there was the sound of a low chuckle in the direction of the street, and, looking round, Alice saw Godfrey leaning over the gate with a most comical expression on his face.

He had heard nearly all the conversation, and said to Alice:

"Beating up recruits for the Mission school, are you, Alice? Don't you go there, Gertie. You are too big and too good-looking, and the room smells awful. She got me down there once, and made me hear a class, and the little imps swapped jack-knives, and fought each other, and called me 'old Schuyler' behind my back, and wondered what business I had trying to teach the Commandments. No, Gertie, go to the other school if you must go somewhere, and I suppose you must, or lose caste with this young lady. Why, she's as zealous as the Pope himself with regard to her church and her school. But come, Allie, it is time to go."

And, opening the gate, he held it, while with a barely civil nod to Gertie, Miss Creighton passed out into the street, and, taking Godfrey's offered arm, walked away, leaving Gertie to look after her and wonder if Mr. Godfrey liked her and meant to marry her some day, and if it was wrong not to be confirmed when she was only twelve years old, and heathenish not to go to Sunday-school when she did not wish to, and could say her lesson at home.

Miss Rossiter had spent a very pleasant afternoon with her friend Mrs. Barton, at the Ridge House, and enjoyed herself famously in talking of the bride, whom she never could like, she said, even though she must confess that her personal appearance was in her favor.

"That was all a hoax about her being lame and old. Godfrey wrote it to tease us," she said. "She cannot be more than thirty-five, and really has some claim to good looks, while

her manners are not bad. But she is an adventuress,—a poor governess, and nothing more ; and she has taken dear Family's place, and everything must give way to her, and our pleasant home is broken up forever." And Miss Rossiter cried a little as she told of the furniture, which had been sent from the house as not good enough for "my lady," when I would have liked it so much for the memories clustering about it,—the very bed poor Emily died on, and I saw her, too !"

Miss Rossiter sobbed aloud, while Mrs. Barton tried to comfort her, and said it was hard, and that, if it would be any comfort to her dear friend, she would not call upon the intruder, or let her daughter Rosamond call either.

That would be some consolation, for Mrs. Grey Barton, of the Ridge House, was a sort of queen in the neighborhood since Lady Emily died, and a slight from her was sure to be felt ; so Miss Rossiter allowed herself to be comforted, and, after dinner, drove herself home in the soft, autumnal twilight.

Edith was standing on the piazza when she came up the steps, and asked if she had spent a pleasant day.

"Yes, it is always pleasant at the Ridge. Mrs. Barton is considered the first lady in the town," Miss Rossiter replied, as she swept proudly up the stairs, feeling that by enlightening Edith with regard to Mrs. Barton's standing she was preparing her to feel the slight about to be offered her.

It was not light enough in her room for her to see anything distinctly when she entered it, and she laid aside her hat and shawl and turned up the gas before she observed the change. Then she started and looked again, and rubbed her eyes, and wondered if she were threatened with softening of the brain, as she had sometimes feared, and saw things which existed only in her imagination. No, there was no fancy here. The airy, graceful bedstead of oak and black walnut, which she had left there that morning, was gone, and in its place loomed the huge, old-fashioned thing, on which she would not sleep for the world. For a moment she stood, wondering what she should do.

"Hallo, auntie, what's the matter? Don't you like it? You are white as a sheet," came cheerily from Godfrey, who

was sauntering down the hall. "You see I thought I'd surprise you, and I worked like a beaver to get it set up. It's all right, I hope."

"Yes, Godfrey, yes," Miss Rossiter gasped. "It was kind in you, but—but——"

"But what, auntie? It is not a *potted sprat*, I hope. You told me that story, you know, and illustrated it, too, when I didn't want to go to school, and said I was sick, and you made me lie in bed all day and take those nasty squills. Don't you really want it in there?"

"No, Godfrey. I thought I did, but I guess I don't. I'm silly, and nervous, and all unstrung with trouble, and I can see my poor sister so plain. You know she died on it. I should not sleep a wink, and I—I—oh, Godfrey,—oh, Godfrey,—take it away, do, please, there is a good boy!"

She was crying a little and trembling a great deal, and as Godfrey never could resist tears, he promised readily, and passing his arm playfully around her waist, drew her into the room, and said:

"All right, let's go at it now. You ring the bell and I'll pull it to pieces."

It did not take long to undo the work of the morning, and the obnoxious bedstead, which nobody seemed to want, was soon stored away in the attic, while, with the help of a little morphine and an electric shock heavier than usual, Miss Rossiter slept tolerably well that night, and dreamed of eating all the "*potted sprats*" served up in Mrs. Opie's "*white lies*."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN HAMPSTEAD.

THERE was a great crowd at church that first Sunday after Mrs. Schuyler's arrival in town. Perhaps it was the brightness of the day, and perhaps it was an unconfessed desire to see the bride, of whose personal appearance so many conflicting rumors were afloat. I was early at church

myself, and felt nervous and excited when I knew that the Schuyler carriage had stopped at the door, and that I should soon see again the beautiful woman who had interested me so greatly. The Morrisses, and Beechers, and Montgomeries, and Bartons from the Ridge, and indeed all the great families of the neighborhood, were already in their seats, and had said their prayers, and found their places, and arranged themselves comfortably and becomingly when the Schuylers came in, the colonel and his bride, with Godfrey and the young ladies following after. Edith's dress was very plain and simple, a rich black silk, with some kind of a gauzy white scarf around her shoulders and a white chip bonnet, with lace and blue ribbons; and yet she was very elegant, as with eyes cast down and a flush on her cheek she walked up the aisle and took her seat in the Schuyler pew. There was perfect silence during the moment she was on her knees, but when she rose and threw a swift, curious glance about her we recovered ourselves and were ready for the "dearly beloved," which I doubt if Edith heard, though she rose to her feet and let our village dressmaker, who sat behind, see just how the back of her skirt was trimmed.

Edith was not thinking of the solemn service in which she joined involuntarily, nor of the many eyes turned upon her, but of the Sundays years ago, when she was a worshipper in that same house, though not in that pew, crimson cushioned and velvet carpeted, but in the humbler seat farther back, where now by some chance little Gertie sat, her blue eyes fixed upon the bride, and her face wearing an expression of perfect content, as if she understood the general impression the lady had made.

Miss Rossiter was not there. She had told Mrs. Barton not to expect her. It would be too great a strain upon her nerves to see that doll in Emily's place, with everybody looking at her, and some admiring her, as no doubt they would. She had called her "a doll," and Mrs. Barton was prepared for a pink-and-white expressionless creature, with some claims to good looks, and an unmistakably lower-class air about her, but she was not prepared for this superb beauty, who took her breath

away, and made her mentally revoke her promise not to call or notice her in any way. It would not do to slight that woman, who would lead Hampstead, and New York, too, if she tried, and Mrs. Barton did not propose to do it. She would rather run the risk of offending Miss Rossiter; and when at last church was out, and they were waiting for the carriages outside the door, she managed to get introduced, and presented her daughter Rosamond, who, for the remainder of the day, raved about the beauty and grace and style of Mrs. Schuyler. Little Gertie half stopped as if to claim acquaintance, but Mary Rogers led her away, and I saw the child look back several times at the lady, to whom she had not yet spoken, and whom she was to meet first at the grave of Abelard Lyle.

Godfrey had said to her, "I must go to the grave to-morrow after dinner," and as she wished to water the flowers and root up any weed which might have come to sight since her last visit, she resolved to be there before him and enjoy his surprise. She knew dinner at Schuyler Hill was served at two o'clock on Sundays, and as Godfrey was not likely to get out before three she had plenty of time, and after her own early dinner started for the cemetery.

There was not much to be done, for the grave was like a pretty flower-bed, and after pulling a weed or two, and digging around a heliotrope, she sat down to rest at the foot of the monument.

Gertie was rather tired, and the day was warm and Godfrey long in coming, and at last she fell asleep with her head against the marble, and did not hear the sound of footsteps on the grassy path which led across the lawn to the yard.

Some one was coming, but it was not Godfrey. He was sitting with Alice upon the balcony, and asking her if she expected a new pupil at the Mission that afternoon, and if she'd like him to go with her. Colonel Schuyler was taking his Sunday nap in his easy-chair, and thus left to herself Edith had resolved upon a visit to the grave, toward which she had looked so many times since her arrival at Schuyler Hill. Only once before had she been in that yard, and that when she planted the rosebush which

now twined about the monument, and made a screen from the sun for the little girl sleeping so sweetly there.

How beautiful she was, and Edith paused a moment to look at her, wondering who she was, and then concluding from the hair that it must be Gertie Westbrooke, who had thrown her the bouquet. Entering the yard she went close to the grave, marvelling to find it in such perfect order, and feeling a sense of suffocation when she saw the vase she had given Ettie Armstrong full of freshly-gathered flowers, which seemed to speak to her so plainly from the dead. Who had done this, as if in welcome to her? Was there any one in Hampstead who suspected her identity?

"Impossible," she said to herself, as she sat down upon the iron chair which stood near the grave. "It is very strange, and this child here too asleep. What a beautiful face she has, and who is it she resembles?" Edith thought, as she marked the regular features, the transparent complexion, the long silken lashes and the glossy auburn hair of the unconscious child.

How plump and pretty were the hands which lay, one on her lap, and the other on the green sward beside her, where it had fallen in the abandonment of sleep. How small, too, and perfectly formed were the little feet, and Edith wondered to see them encased in such dainty boots, just as she wondered at the whole appearance of the child who interested and fascinated her so much.

"I wish she would awake. I'd like to talk with her," she thought, and as if the wish had communicated itself to Gertie, the long lashes lifted slowly, disclosing a pair of eyes so bright and blue and lovely in their expression, that Edith half started, and thought, with a pang, of eyes she had seen years ago, but which now were closed forever and laid away beneath the turf at her feet.

Gertie was quite awake now, and a sweet smile broke over her face and showed itself in her very eyes when she saw who was with her.

"Oh, Mrs. Schuyler," she said, advancing at once and without the least timidity toward the lady. "Oh, Mrs. Schuyler,

it's you. I was waiting for Godfrey, and went to sleep and had such a nice dream of mother, who was alive, I thought, and father too."

She was standing close to Edith, who, reaching out her hand, took Gertie's in it, and forgetting that Mrs. Rogers was not the child's own mother, said, in some surprise :

"Your mother is not dead !"

"Yes, she is," Gertie replied. "She died when I was a little tiny girl, and father married again and Auntie Rogers took me away, and then father died, too, in Italy. Is not Mr. Godfrey coming to see the grave ? he said he would yesterday."

She was more intent on Godfrey than on her parentage, and, at her mention of the grave, Edith asked, quickly :

"What grave is Godfrey coming to see ?"

"This one," and Gertie pointed to the flower-bed where the vase was standing. "You see," she continued, "this is Mr. Lyle's grave,—Mr. James A. Lyle, who died in saving Mr. Godfrey's life. He was working on the tower of the house at Schuyler Hill, and Mr. Godfrey was a little boy, and climbed up and slipped, and Mr. Lyle caught him, and threw him where he was safe, but fell himself down—down—down—to the very earth, where he was smashed all to bits, and they took him up as dead as dead could be !"

Gertie was very eloquent and earnest, and emphasized her "down—down—down" with a wave of her hand in the air and a stamp of her foot upon the ground, while Edith, who could not speak for the fingers at her throat, sat gazing at her, motionless and completely fascinated by her face, and manner, and voice, which last had in it the ring of something familiar,—something heard years ago, when she was young and listened to the bell in the old church-tower ringing on a Sunday morning. When she could speak, she asked :

"How did you learn all this, and who keeps the grave so nicely ?"

"I do ; for you see Miss Armstrong,—that's my teacher, she was at church to-day, and plays the organ,—she came here with me one time, and, when I asked about the graves, she told me

whose they were,—that is, the newest ones. That great, tall stone is the first Mrs. Schuyler ; but you don't care for that. She was not half as pretty as you, they say, and so he had to get her this grand stone, which cost two or three thousand dollars. I dote on graves, and like to hear about them, and Miss Armstrong told me about this poor boy, or man he must have been, for he was a young girl's beau, I guess."

"A what?" Edith gasped. And Gertie went on :

"There was a beautiful young girl here then, from England, —Heloise Fordham,—and she liked Mr. Lyle, and he liked her, and she cried so when he was killed, and had a dreadful headache ; and when she went away, she made Miss Armstrong promise to keep up the grave till she came back to see it, and to water the rosebush which she set out, and keep the vase full of flowers in the summer time. And Miss Armstrong did water the rose,—and for a while she tended the grave, hoping to hear from the girl, or that she would come ; but she never did, and so at last she grew tired like and careless, and, when she told me about it that day, it was a sight to see for weeds. I like to dig and work in the dirt, and so I made it nice, thinking Godfrey would be pleased ; and then, too, do you know, I do it part for the girl, Heloise, who lived in the very house where I live now, and slept in my room. And the poor man was carried there, and his coffin and funeral were in the great room ; but I never told auntie, because she is afraid of ghosts. I am not, though, and I like to think about him and her, and to make believe she is there with me, crying by the window for the lover dead down stairs ; and once,—it's funny, but it was the night you came,—I lay awake ever so long, and fancied she was there, and, before I knew it, said right out aloud, ' Poor Heloise, Gertie is sorry for you.'"

"Oh, child, child, hush, hush!" Edith cried, as she drew Gertie to her and pressed her close to her side.

"Why, is it wicked? Was it naughty to make believe she was there and talk to her?" Gertie asked, wonderingly ; and Edith replied :

"No, no, not that ; talk to her, pity her, pray for her all you

please ; and tell me, has nothing been heard of her since she went away ? ”

“ Nothing, I guess ; and Miss Armstrong said maybe she’s dead or married. I do not like to think her dead. I’d rather believe her married and alive. Don’t you suppose she is ? ”

“ Yes, I believe she is married ; and I know she would be so grateful to you and love you so much if she knew what care you take of the grave.” And obeying an impulse she could not resist, Edith smoothed the bright hair back from the fair white forehead, and looking straight into the clear, blue eyes, kissed the child, whose lips kissed back again and sent a strange tremor through every nerve of Edith’s body.

“ Had you heard of this grave before ? ” Gertie asked, puzzled a little at the lady’s manner ; and Edith replied :

“ Yes ; Godfrey told me of it in England, and Colonel Schuyler too, and on our bridal tour we went to see Mr. Lyle’s mother ; ” and in a low voice Edith told the listening child of the white-haired old woman knitting in the sunshine by the door of that thatched cottage among the heather hills. “ I promised to write to her,” she added, “ and tell her about the grave, and perhaps you will press me some flowers which grew here and I’ll send them in the letter ? ”

“ Oh, I’d like to do that,” Gertie said ; and in a moment her nimble fingers had gathered the few flowers still in blossom, and which were destined for that home beyond the sea where Abelard once lived.

“ I pity that old lady so much, and like her too ; she seems so much like my grandma, though I don’t know where she is. Auntie never told me.”

“ You have one, then ? ” Edith asked, and Gertie told her all she knew of herself, not forgetting the forty pounds a year which was to pay for her education, for she meant to be a teacher like Miss Armstrong, and play the organ, maybe, when Miss Armstrong was too old.

How interested Edith was in this little girl who puzzled, and confused, and bewildered her so ; they were getting acquainted with each other rapidly when a man’s step sounded in the dis-

tance, and turning quickly, while a look of eager joy lighted up her face, Gertie cried :

"It is Mr. Godfrey, I guess."

But Mr. Godfrey was still doing duty at Alice's side, and the newcomer was Robert Macpherson, who was coming directly toward the cemetery, which he reached before he discovered its occupants. Then, with a start and a blush, as if detected in something he would hide, he lifted his hat to Mrs. Schuyler and went forward to greet her.

"And here is Gertie too," he said, as he offered her his hand ; then turning again to Edith he explained that he had just come from New York in the train which passed a few moments ago.

"Came from New York to-day ! Why, Mr. Macpherson, it's Sunday !" Gertie exclaimed, while Edith smiled, and Mr. Macpherson looked amused as he replied to the child, who believed in the fourth commandment.

"Yes, Gertie, I know it is Sunday, and that I should have waited until to-morrow, inasmuch as there was nothing more pressing than homesickness, for to tell the truth I was homesick in the city, and after church this morning,—there came over me such a longing for the country and a familiar face that I resolved to take the first train to Hampstead. That is why I am here on Sunday, little Puritan," and he smiled good-humoredly at Gertie, thinking what a wonderful face she had, and how like she was to the sister sleeping under the English skies, and then he glanced at the well-kept grave and at the monument and the name upon it, "James A. Lyle," and said aloud, in an absent kind of way :

"Born in Alnwick."

"He saved Godfrey's life, you know, and lost his own," Gertie said, while Mr. Macpherson bowed and answered :

"Yes, I know," but gave no sign that when on reaching the brow of the hill on his way from the station he saw the white headstone gleaming in the distance, he came that way to see for himself this very grave of Abelard Lyle, who was born in Alnwick.

"Shall we go to the house Godfrey will be glad to know

you are here," Edith said, and as she spoke something in the expression of her face made Robert glance quickly from her to Gertie, who was tying on her bonnet.

"They certainly are alike," he thought. "They would do splendidly in a picture as '*Les Sœurs*,'" and then, as Edith was ready, he walked by her side with Gertie in attendance, until they reached the place where their paths diverged, and Gertie said "good-by," while Edith and Robert went leisurely toward the house.

CHAPTER XXX.

COMPANY AT SCHUYLER HILL.

IN the course of two or three weeks nearly everybody of any social standing in Hampstead called upon the bride. Mrs. Barton and her daughter Rosamond from the Ridge drove over at a very early day, much to the discomfiture of Miss Rossiter, who had told her nieces in confidence that "Mrs. Barton had no intention of calling upon a governess," that "Mrs. Schuyler need not expect much attention from the *beau monde*." Great, then, was her surprise when she went down to meet them; and greeted them a little coldly even while affecting to appropriate their call to herself. But neither Mrs. Barton nor Rosamond seemed to notice her perturbation, and both were delighted with Mrs. Schuyler, who looked and appeared as if all her life had been passed amid just such surroundings as these at Schuyler Hill.

Miss Rossiter saw this, and thought best to change her tactics altogether; and when, as she accompanied her friend to the door, the latter said to her, "I find your sister-in-law very charming," she replied:

"Yes, I am glad you like her; and it was so kind in you to call. I appreciate it, I assure you."

And this was the ground she constantly took. Whoever

called came expressly for her sake and the sake of the family, rather than from any desire to be polite to the bride.

"The Schuylers are so highly respected, and sister Emily was such a favorite with everybody that you must expect attention, of course," she would say to Edith, who smiled quietly, and understood what was meant quite as well as if it had been put in plainer words.

! Miss Rossiter did not like her, but had she been asked a reason for her dislike she could not have given one or brought a single accusation against Edith, except that she was not to the purple born, and was there in Emily's place. That was all, and that was enough. She had declared war against her, and she meant to carry it out.

But Edith understood her, and parried all her little mean thrusts, and, when questioned before the young ladies of her life in England and the people she knew, answered that she knew nobody except the families where she had taught, and spoke unhesitatingly of her mother, who took lodgers to eke out her slender income; and, when Miss Rossiter suggested to her that it might be as well not to speak of her mother's lodgers, and offered her advice on certain points of etiquette, telling her it was better not to laugh quite so much, and that such and such dresses were not just the thing for certain occasions, Edith answered good-humoredly, and thanked Miss Rossiter for her advice; but laughed just the same, and shocked the spinster every day at dinner with the sight of her fair, creamy arms and neck, and devoutly wished the lady would return to New York, and leave her in peace. But Miss Rossiter was in no haste to do this; she was averse to exertion of any kind, and found her brother-in-law's home so much to her taste and the bride so much better than she had feared, that she had decided to remain in Hampstead until after the grand party, which was to be given at Schuyler Hill, and for which great preparations were making, both in the kitchen, where Mrs. Tiffe was in the full tide of cake and cream and jelly, and in the town, where everybody with any claim to society expected an invitation.

Mine came to the school-room, and I read it after school, with Gertie standing at my side and looking over my shoulder.

"Oh, that's the party I've heard about! They are to have a band and lights in the trees, and colored waiters in white gloves, and everything. Oh, I wish I could go! Do you think they will invite children like me?" Gertie said, excitedly.

It did not occur to her that there could be any reason why she should not be invited except that she was a child, and I did not enlighten her, but said she was probably too young.

The next morning her face was very bright as she told me what she had heard from Norah, who was down to see her mother. Mrs. Rogers was to assist in the evening, and Gertie was to go, too, and perhaps see the dancing from some post of observation, while Norah had promised to ask Mrs. Schuyler if she might come in and see her after she was dressed, and before she went down stairs.

"And then," Gertie added, "next week they are to have the Church Sociable, and everybody goes to that, you know, and auntie is to do up my muslin dress, and I shall dance, maybe with Mr. Godfrey. Oh, I wish it was now!"

She was quite as wild over the Church Sociable as the Hampstead ladies were over the party, which came off the 10th of October, and was a grand affair. The night was soft and warm as June, and though there was no moon the lanterns in the trees and on the pedestals lighted up the grounds sufficiently to show their beauty, and make it pleasant to walk about in them. The house itself was ablaze with light, and brilliant with rare and costly flowers, while the band played several sweet airs before the guests began to arrive. In her room upstairs Edith stood dressed in her bridal robes, and looking more beautiful than she had upon her wedding day, for her cheeks were rounder now, with a soft, delicate pink showing through the dazzling white, while her eyes had in them a new brightness, and shone like the diamonds Norah was clasping on her neck and arms.

"Oh, how lovely you are," Norah said, when the last touch was given to her mistress's toilet, and she stood back to admire

her. Then after a moment's hesitancy, she added "There is a little girl down-stairs dying to see you, ma'am, in your party dress, Gertie Westbrooke. My cousin is here assisting, you know, and brought the child. Would you mind her coming up the back way just to look at you?"

"Certainly not," Edith replied; and in a few moments Gertie came in, her face glowing and sparkling with delight as she saw the beautiful woman standing before the long mirror, decked in satin and lace and diamonds, her golden brown hair curled as she used to wear it in her girlhood, and falling over a comb behind.

"Oh, my lady! oh, Mrs. Schuyler, you ought to be the queen, only you are a thousand times handsomer than she!" Gertie cried, clasping her hands together, while tears started to her eyes and dropped from her eyelashes.

"Why, child, what is the matter? What makes you cry?" Edith asked, and Gertie replied:

"I don't know, I always cry when I see a beautiful picture or hear the grand music and the band playing outside, and the house and grounds lighted up, and you so glorious. I can't help it. Oh, if I only were rich, and could go with the people below!"

"Poor child," Edith said softly, as she laid her hand on the wavy hair of the little girl. "You might not be as happy as you are now, and then if you were rich you are too young to attend a party of this kind."

"Yes, I know," Gertie answered; "but I like fine dresses, and things, and people, and I do wish I might some day be dressed just like you, and stand where you do with my train so long behind me, and I waiting for somebody."

"Gertie," the lady said, after a moment's reflection, "the guests are to remove their wraps in the large room opposite, and by sitting in that chair and turning the gas down you can see them as they pass. Would you like it?"

"Yes, so much," was the eager reply, and just then the colonel came for his bride to lead her to the drawing-room.

He saw Gertie, but thought she was there to render some

service to his wife and paid no attention to her. The moment he was gone Gertie turned down the gas, and ensconcing herself in the large easy-chair waited the coming of the guests. And while she waited Godfrey looked in, and seeing the little figure in the chair, walked up to it and said :

“ Who’s there ? Gertie, as I live ! What are you doing ? ”

“ Mrs. Schuyler said I might sit here and see the ladies pass in their gay dresses, so I’m making believe I’m one of them, and at the party, too. Oh if it was only real, and I could dance the Lancers ! ”

“ Gertie, I say, how are you dressed ? ” Godfrey asked, turning up the gas and inspecting the child. “ No, that won’t do, —not the ‘ wedding garments,’ you know. Gertie, I tell you what, we are to have the church sociable next week, and that is a heap nicer than a party. Come, then, and I’ll dance your shoes off with you. There’s a ring,—I must go. When you get tired of making believe here, go round to the north staircase, and you can look down into the hall and dining-room. Good-by.”

He was gone just as the first arrivals came up the stairs and into the room opposite where Gertie sat. And Gertie watched them eagerly and heard all they said, and mentally commented upon their attire, and compared them with Edith ; and then, when they were all gone, crept cautiously round to the north staircase where Godfrey had said she could see the dancing.

The party was a great success, with no drawback whatever, except the fact that Tom Barton from the Ridge drank too much champagne and became noisy and uproarious, and when by chance he stumbled upon Gertie, who was making her way to the kitchen through a side passage, he told her : “ Ze was ze pressiest girl there, by gorrie,” and emphasized his compliment with a kiss. For this audacity Godfrey, who happened to be in sight, seized him by the collar and thrust him headlong out of doors, bidding him stay there till he could behave.

Edith was pronounced perfectly charming by every one, and no young girl received as much flattery and attention as the beautiful mistress of the festivities, who bore herself like a prin-

cess, and received the commendations of those about her with a sweet graciousness of manner which won every heart. She was not fond of dancing and only went on the floor twice, once with Godfrey and once with Robert Macpherson, who was quite a lion with the girls, especially as he was new and a foreigner.

"The Macphersons are very rich, and there's a title in the family; he only paints and sketches because he likes it; he is not obliged to do it," Julia explained to Rosamond Barton, who was questioning his antecedents and pronouncing him "splendid and *distingué*, with a face like a poet."

It was very late when the party broke up, and it was later still when Mrs. Rogers' duties were over and she led the tired, sleepy Gertie by the hand through the morning moonlight to the cottage by the bridge. Gertie had seen a great deal of the party, and had envied the young ladies whom Godfrey whirled in the dance, and wished herself one of them. But there had been a comfort in knowing that her turn would come next week at the sociable, to which everybody was invited on the following Sunday, when the Rev. Mr. Marks, the new Rector at St. Luke's, gave notice that the first church sociable of the season would be at Schuyler Hill on Thursday evening, adding that as the proceeds were to be appropriated for a new melodeon, which was greatly needed at the Mission School, a full attendance was desired.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE CHURCH SOCIABLE.

THE young ladies had enjoyed the party thoroughly, but the church sociable was another thing, and the blame of it was charged entirely to Edith, who was really not in fault.

Mr. Marks, the rector, was very zealous in his work, and one morning, while calling upon Edith, he broached the subject of the sociable. They were needing so much money, he said,

and there was no house in the parish which would accommodate so many people or attract so great a crowd as the house at Schuyler Hill, and he wished Mrs. Schuyler would consent to have the sociable for once.

Edith knew nothing at all of church sociables, or in what disfavor they were held in the house, and answered: "Certainly; I am quite willing if my husband is. You can ask him." Julia, who was just entering the room, overheard the proposition, and went at once with the news to her aunt and Alice.

"The idea of a Mite Society here," she said, with everybody coming, and Mrs. Vandeusenhsen the first to ring the bell, and Mrs. Thockmorton's hired girl the second. It is preposterous. But father will never allow it, I am sure. Mr. Marks is to ask him, you know?"

"Don't flatter yourself, my dear, or count upon what your father may or may not do," Miss Rossiter said, with all the scorn her thin lips could express. "New wives make new laws, and your father is a mere tool in that woman's hands. Once he had a will of his own, now he has none, save that of her, whose low-born tastes will lead her to consort with such people as a Mite Society will bring."

Miss Rossiter was very bitter, and something of her poison was communicated to her niece, who was very distant toward Edith at lunch, and on the plea of headache declined to drive with her as she had intended doing. So Emma went instead, leaving her sister and aunt to talk Edith up and wonder if Colonel Schuyler would consent. Julia was sure he would not, and yet she felt glad when she saw him riding up the avenue, inasmuch as she would have an opportunity of speaking to him first. But the rector had seen the colonel in town, and told him of his call upon Edith, and her willingness to have the society, provided her husband did not object.

"Yes, certainly,—a society,—a sociable,—I—I—I am not quite certain I understand just what that is. I do not think I ever went to one," the colonel said, spitting two or three times and looking a little disturbed.

Mr. Marks explained as well as he could and expatiated

largely upon the good which resulted from these promiscuous assemblies, where all met upon a level, as Christian people should.

"It gives the poor and neglected a chance to get acquainted," he said, "and thus promotes good feelings and religious growth generally."

"Yes, certainly," the colonel said, abstractedly, as he beat the tip of his boot with his riding-whip. "I don't think there's ever been a thing like it at Schuyler Hill, but have it by all means, if Mrs. Schuyler signified the least desire for it."

The colonel's chestnut mare was pawing the turf, impatient to be off, and bowing stiffly to the rector, Col. Schuyler mounted her and galloped toward home, where he was met by Julia and Miss Rossiter, who plunged at once into the obnoxious society, which they trusted he would veto. Miss Rossiter was the principal speaker, and she said that Mrs. Schuyler could not understand or appreciate her position as his wife, if she wished such a mixture of people to come there, trampling on their velvet carpets and spilling cream on their handsome furniture.

"And, Howard, you may just as well be master of your own house first as last, unless you wish an entire new element introduced into your social relations."

The colonel himself had been a little disturbed about the society, not knowing exactly whether it were *au fait*, but something in Miss Rossiter's manner angered him, as it implied reproach to Edith, and he roused at once in her defence and said he had seen Mr. Marks, who alone was responsible if there was anything wrong in the affair; that he had given his consent and should not withdraw it, but should expect his daughters to do whatever was necessary to make the gathering a success. That settled it, and Miss Rossiter took one of her headaches and retired to her room and did not appear at dinner, where with a stern glance at Julia, whose face was cloudy and dark, the colonel said to his wife:

"Ah, my dear, I met Mr. Marks, who persuaded me into having the Sewing Society, or something of that kind, with

sponge-cake and cream, at our house next week, provided you do not object."

"Not at all ; I told him I did not," Edith replied, and the colonel continued :

"Then, my daughter," turning to Julia, "see that Mrs. Tiff has everything in readiness."

Julia bowed, while Godfrey dropped his fork and almost hurried in his surprise. *He* knew what a Church Sociable with sponge-cake and cream meant ; he had attended more than one in Hampstead, and danced with every girl there, and every forlorn, neglected woman who wanted a partner, but he had never dreamed of bringing the mixed assemblage across that aristocratic threshold, and lo it was coming without his aid, and he was delighted, and he invited every man, woman and child in town, and came to me with a beaming face and told me the good news, and asked if I would play the piano for them, and said he would get two or three musicians to accompany me and have a "smashing time."

"It will be enough sight nicer than the party was," he said to his sisters, when, on Sunday after the notice had been given out, they were discussing it and expressing their contempt for the whole thing. "Folks will enjoy themselves at a sociable ; they always do, and they don't get drunk either, as that puppy Tom Barton did, nor stay all night ; they go home at a Christian hour. I know ; I've been to them and it is great fun, I tell you. I mean to dance with Mrs. Vandeusenhisen, too, if she is here. You ought to see Widow Barringer and Nat. Allen. They take all the steps, and do not mince along as some girls I know of *They* dance, I tell you."

"Oh, Godfrey, how can you talk and act so low," Julia said ; but before Godfrey could reply Edith joined the group, which in consequence was soon after broken up.

The Sociable was much talked of in Hampstead, and everybody went, from Rosamond Barton and her brother Tom, down to Mrs. Vandeusenhisen, who entered through the kitchen ; leading the twins, Godfrey Schuyler and Schuyler Godfrey. "They were so anxious to come to the doin's and get some

cream," she said, "that she concluded to bring 'em, seein' it was free and she had as good right there as the next one."

With the most intense disgust, bristling in her cap ribbons and every fold of her stiff silk dress, Mrs. Tiffe bowed and said :

"You better sit here, until the ladies are ready to receive you. Miss Creighton and Miss Schuyler are not yet dressed."

Mrs. Vandeusenhisen took this advice very meekly and sat with a boy each side of her, looking curiously around the kitchen, until the door-bell rang and she heard the voice of Mr. Marks, the Rector. Then her dignity rose, and the kitchen could content her no longer. Her minister had come, and where he was she had a right to be, and seizing her twins she started for the parlor, where with the fun fairly leaping from his eyes and shining all over his face, Godfrey received her and presented her to Edith. But the splendors of the drawing-room were too much for Mrs. Vandeusenhisen, and after a low courtesy and a whisper to the twins "to make their manners to the lady," the poor woman sank abashed into a corner, where she found a silken couch on which she ensconced herself with her twins, and bidding them keep still if they did not want to be skinned alive, she prepared to enjoy herself by watching the arrivals.

The bell rang constantly now, and with each ring Julia, who was still in her room, stole to the bannister and looking over to see who had come, ran back to report to Alice and Miss Rossiter. This last lady had a headache, and her nerves would not allow her to mingle in the promiscuous crowd assembling below, the Goths and Vandals who had never set foot in that house before.

"What would Emily say?" she groaned, as Julia reported ore after another, the Widow Barringer, and Nat. Allen, and Mrs. Peter Clafflin with Mrs. Vandeusenhisen and the twins.

Poor Miss Rossiter leaned back despairingly on her pillows, and wondered "who would come next." It was Tom and Rosamond Barton, and the latter came straight to Miss Rossiter's room, and said "it was such fun, and she meant to coax

mamma to have it, and she wished Miss Rossiter could go down and enjoy it!"

Julia, Alice and Rosamond descended the stairs together and were met at the foot by Godfrey, who said :

"Now, girls, cheek by jowl with Tom, Dick, and Harry, and Peterkin Vandeusenhsen. Look, Alice! there he is casting sheep's eyes at you, and gotten up stunningly, too."

And truly Peterkin was stunning in his yellow vest and flame-colored cravat, which was tied in a most wonderful bow, and he stood blushing and smiling and watching Alice Creighton, and wondering if she would let him dance with her. The house was full by this time, and a more promiscuous crowd was rarely ever seen in a gentleman's parlors, or a better behaved, considering everything.

"Really, my dear, it is very remarkable how well they conduct themselves," the colonel said to Edith, as he stood at her side and looked at the people who neither laughed nor talked noisily, nor jostled each other, but spoke together in low, subdued tones as they moved about and quietly inspected the handsome rooms and furniture.

Dancing commenced at eight in the large breakfast-room, which had been cleared for the occasion. Tom Barton, who when himself was very gentlemanly and agreeable, was the first upon the floor with Emma as his partner, while Robert Macpherson followed next with Julia, and Godfrey with Rosamond.

"Come, boys, fill up, fill up," Godfrey cried, to the row of bashful youths, looking longingly at the row of expectant girls. "We want some one to fill our set. Here, Peterkin, get your girl and join us."

"I dassent for fear she won't," Peter said, blushing to the roots of his hair.

Godfrey knew who *she* was, and answered the timid swain :

"Nonsense! You are too faint-hearted. Yes, she will; try her, and hurry up!"

Thus encouraged, Peter made his way to Alice, and making the bow he had practised at intervals for a week in anticipation of this very event, said, with a face as red as his necktie :

"Miss Creighton, will you please to be—so good—as to—dance this time with me? Mr. Godfrey said how you would."

With a look of ineffable scorn, Alice replied:

"Thank you, sir. I do not dance to-night."

Her eyes and voice expressed her contempt, and Peter felt it, and utterly crestfallen and abashed, went back to Godfrey and said:

"I tole you she wouldn't, and she won't."

"Oh, bother; but never mind, there's,—but no."

And Godfrey stopped short in what he was going to say.

Gertie had paid her respects to Edith, and then, attracted by the music, made her way to the breakfast-room and stood within the door.

Godfrey's first thought when he saw her was to give her to Peterkin for a partner, but some undefined feeling forced the impulse back. He could see proud Alice Creighton dance with Peter and think it rare fun, but not this beautiful child, who might thus be classed with the lout. Her partners must be the best in the room, Robert Macpherson, and himself, and young Ransom, the judge's son, who fortunately came that way just then looking for a lady.

"Here, Will. We want you here. Let me introduce you to the prettiest girl in the room," Godfrey said; and the next moment Gertie stood upon the floor opposite Robert and Julia Schuyler.

How pretty and graceful she was, and how well she went through with the dance, never making the slightest mistake, but seeming to carry her tall partner along by the airy ease of her motions.

"I say, Schuyler, who is that princess in disguise I have just danced with?" young Ransom said to Godfrey, after he had led Gertie to a seat.

"She is a princess in disguise, I do believe. Isn't she pretty though?" Godfrey replied; and then he told what he knew of Gertie Westbrooke, and added, laughingly: "But nands off, if you please. She is only thirteen, and I will not have her harmed."

"Better talk to Tom Barton, then. See, he is asking her to dance," was Will Ransom's reply, and glancing where Gertie sat, Godfrey saw Tom bending before the child, who, remembering the insult on the night of the party, coolly declined the honor intended her without offering an excuse. But Tom understood her, and after standing an awkward moment and regarding her intently, he said :

"Miss Gertie, you are right to refuse me unless I apologize for my rudeness the other night. I was drunk, to speak plain, and did not know what I was doing. I beg your pardon, and by and-by if I ask you to dance I hope you will not refuse."

Tom could be very agreeable and polite, and in spite of his fault he was a favorite with many, and when he spoke so frankly to Gertie she felt that she forgave him, and promised to join him in the next dance if he liked. Gertie did not lack for partners that night, and what was best of all, they were from the "*crème de la crème*" of the town. Will Ransom twice, Robert Macpherson twice, Tom Barton once, and at last Godfrey himself, who had only danced the first set in order to get the thing going, he said. It was the Lancers, Gertie's favorite, and Godfrey led her to a conspicuous place, and all through the dance felt a thrill of pride in the graceful creature, who seemed to float rather than walk through the different changes.

A little apart Edith stood, watching the child, wondering at her skill. With a sign to Godfrey she made him understand that he was to bring Gertie to her when the dance was ended.

"Who taught you to dance?" she asked, as she looked down upon the sparkling face.

"I had a teacher in London two quarters," was Gertie's reply, and then as her hand was claimed again she glided away, leaving Edith to watch and wonder and try to recall, if possible, the face or the expression of which Gertie reminded her.

It was very gay at Schuyler Hill that night, for as the evening advanced the stiffness which had at first characterized the strangers wore away, and those who did not dance joined in the games which were played in an adjoining room, and Miss Rosamiter, in her lone chamber, corked her ears with cotton to shut

out the noise, which was far more harsh and discordant because it came from what she termed the "*canaille*." Financially, too, the Sociable was a great success, for after the colonel had added his donation in the shape of a "twenty," it was found that they had raised seventy dollars, and that the melodeon was sure. Had it not been, the colonel would have paid the balance rather than open his doors again, for the affair was not to his taste, and he was glad when the last guest had said good-night and his house was cleared of them all. He did not like church sociables, and his daughters did not like them, and Mrs. Tiffe did not like them, though there was one comfort, that worthy matron said—"They ate up all the dry cake left from the party," and she congratulated herself upon having two fresh loaves of sponge left as she locked up her store-room and silver, and retired for the night.

Gertie was too much excited to sleep, and long after her return home she sat and talked of the Sociable and what she had seen, and when at last she laid her head upon her pillow it was with the conviction that she never could be as happy again as she had been that night at Schuyler Hill, dancing the Lancers with Godfrey.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MRS. ROGERS SPEAKS HER MIND.

WHALLO, Bob, are you going anywhere in particular?" was Godfrey's salutation to Robert Macpherson, when the next afternoon he met him at a point in the grounds where two paths diverged.

"Just to town for a walk. Are you going anywhere in particular?" was the reply, to which Godfrey responded:

"Just away from town for a walk."

And so the two took different roads and sauntered on until, curiously enough, they met again at the gate of Mrs. Rogers's cottage, where Gertie sat alone upon the porch.

"Did you start to come here?" Robert asked, coloring a little, and Godfrey replied :

"Yes ; did you ?" while his face wore a look of annoyance, which was in no wise lessened when ten minutes later Tom Barton also appeared, and seemed to think it a good joke that they had all met there together and so found each other out.

"I don't know what there is to find out," Godfrey said doggedly, adding, as he rose to his feet with an impatient shake of his pants : "This is most too much of a good thing, and I think I'll go."

"Please, Mr. Godfrey, don't," Gertie said beseechingly, feeling intuitively that hers was rather a novel position, alone with three young men, and that Godfrey was in some way a protection.

He came to see her of course, but she was too much a child to think for a moment that the remembrance of her blue eyes and wavy hair had brought the others there. They came, no doubt, to get some *sewing* done, and she was sorry her auntie was gone, and very glad when at last she saw her coming round the turn in the road, for now they could give their orders and go away.

For an instant Mary Rogers stopped short at sight of three town-bred, fashionable young men, with perfumed locks, and fancy canes, and short coats, and soft hats, sitting before her door, with Gertie in their midst, looking so beautiful and pure and innocent, and so unconscious withal of the admiration she was exciting. Then, the good honest-minded woman's resolution was taken, and she went swiftly up the walk and courtesying to her visitors asked what she could do for them.

"Nothing, nothing, madame, we simply came to call," Tom Barton replied, inspecting her curiously, as if she had been a Hottentot, and wondering how that dainty bit of flesh and blood in the blue dress and pantalets chanced to belong to her.

"Come to call, did you. I am sorry then I happened to be out. Gertie, I brought this letter from the office for Mrs. Simmons. Tie on your bonnet and take it to her directly," Mary Rogers said, while a dead silence fell upon the group of young men, each of whom looked at the others inquiringly.

Gertie was only sorry to leave Godfrey, but reflecting that if she hurried he might be there when she came back, she hastened away, while her admirers looked after her until the turn in the road hid her from view. Then Mrs. Rogers spoke, standing up before them with a flush on her face and a dignity in her tone and manner which commanded respect from her audience.

"Young men," she began, "you came to see Gertie, and I don't like it, and won't allow it either. She is too young to have such ideas put in her head, even were you honest, which you are not. Not one of you would marry her, or be willing to be seen with her by your fashionable city friends, if she were older than she is. You do not look upon her as your equal, and you only come to amuse yourselves with her because she is pretty and sweet; but it shall not be. It's no credit to a girl in Gertie's position to have a lot of chaps like you hanging round her and putting stuff into her head, and I won't have a breath of harm done to her future good name by your coming here and talking nonsense, which you don't mean, and I put it to your honor to do by my child as you would have a body do by your sister if she was as young and innocent as Gertie."

"By George, you are right! and I give you my hand as a gentleman that by no act of mine shall Gertie be compromised!" Tom Barton exclaimed, as he rose to his feet and offered his hand to Gertie's champion.

Tom's example was followed by Robert Macpherson, but Godfrey sat still in his chair. Mrs. Rogers did not mean him, of course. She knew he never would harm any woman, and he was not going to promise not to see Gertie Westbrooke, and talk to her, too, as much as he liked. But it was a good thing to snub that drunken Tom Barton, who was half-intoxicated now, and he felt like cheering Mrs. Rogers, and meant to stay after the others were gone, and tell her so. But Robert Macpherson meant to stay, too, and, after waiting impatiently ten or fifteen minutes, Godfrey arose at last and said good-afternoon, wondering within himself why "Bob would stick himself where he was not wanted."

Robert had business with Mrs. Rogers, and, when alone with

her, he began at once by assuring her that so far as he was concerned she had nothing to fear for Gertie.

"And you will know you have not," he continued, "when I tell you that she is the very image of the only sister I ever had,—the little girl who died when just Gertie's age, and of whom I never think without a throb of pain."

It was this wonderful likeness, he said, which first attracted him to Gertie, and made him so desirous for her portrait, as he had none of his sister. And then he went on to tell how fond he was of his profession as an artist, and that as there were so many fine views in the vicinity of Hampstead, he wished to remain there for a time, sketching and studying the autumnal scenery, and, as he would not of course stay at Schuyler Hill, he wished to rent a room in some quiet house, and take his meals at the hotel.

Had Mrs. Rogers such a room, and would she let it to him for a liberal compensation? Mrs. Rogers was in need of money. Her own health was not good, and Gertie's education and music would cost so much that Robert's offer was a tempting one, and she considered it for a few moments, and then said yes, and showed him the large, pleasant room where Abelard Lyle's coffin had stood, and where, within a few days, easels, and pallets, and brushes, and paint were scattered about promiscuously; for Robert had taken possession, and dubbed the room his "Den," and was going to paint "*La Sœur*" from Gertie's face, and then retouch from his memory of his sister.

Mary Rogers had struck a powerful blow for Gertie, and hedged her round with the respect of the young men, who otherwise might have turned her head as she grew to womanhood, with all her wondrous beauty and fascinating sweetness, but for a time she felt some misgivings as to the propriety of having taken Robert Macpherson as a lodger. But when she saw how quiet and unobtrusive he was, never seeking either herself or her child, unless he needed them for the sittings, her watchfulness gradually subsided, and she felt that her home was pleasanter for having the artist there.

TIM Barton came sometimes to see him, but he never asked for Gertie, and if by chance he saw her going out or coming in, he treated her with as much deference as if she had been one of the ladies from Schuyler Hill. For a few weeks Godfrey was there every day, and sometimes twice a day, but as she knew him better Mary had no fears of him, and trusted her darling to him as if he had been a brother.

And Gertie did him good, and always reproved him in her outspoken way, when she found him relapsing into careless habits of speaking, and kept him constantly upon his good behavior when he was with her. But she did not think him a gentleman, and she frankly told him so when in November he came to say good-by, before going to Andover, where he hoped to prepare himself for Yale the following year. In a laughing way he referred to her promise made on the ship, and she replied :

"I heard you say by George, and call your father the Governor, and you are *not* a gentleman yet ;" but her lip quivered a little, and it was long ere Godfrey forgot the expression of the blue eyes, which looked at him so wistfully as Gertie said good-by, and told him so innocently how much she should miss him.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE NEW LIFE AT THE HILL.

IT was just one year from the day when Edith came to Hampstead, and over the house upon the Hill a dark cloud was hanging, as hour after hour went by, and there seemed to be no hope for the pale-faced woman lying at the very gates of death, and talking in her delirium of things which no one understood. She had been thus ever since the birth of the infant boy, at which the colonel scarcely looked, so intense was his anxiety for the young mother, who, whenever he came near her with words of tenderness, motioned him away, saying :

"No, no, you mustn't, you don't know. It is not the first, as you think. Oh, my baby, I don't know where she is; find her, Howard; find my baby for me."

He brought her the little mite of flesh and blood wrapped in soft cambric and flannel, and said:

"Look, Edith, here is our boy; shall I lay it beside you?"

Very wistfully the gray eyes glanced for a moment into the colonel's face and then down upon the child, while a look of anguish crept into them as Edith cried:

"No, no, this is not the one. I want my lost baby, with the blue eyes. Will no one find it for me?"

Then in a curious way she would examine her surroundings and whisper to herself:

"Handsome furniture, fine linen, silken curtains, and silver dishes to eat from. This is not the place. Mother, mother, where am I, and are you there by the fire with baby?"

She was back again in London in the forlorn room in Dorset street, and the rain was splashing against the windows just as it did that dreary day, and she heard the footsteps of the lodgers on the stairs and the roar of the great city, and fought again the battle for her child, and the iron hand came back and clutched her throat and strangled her until her face was purple and she writhed in the agonies of suffocation. Then, when the paroxysm was over she lay for hours in a swoon so nearly resembling death, that at last they thought her gone and the whisper that she was dead ran through the hall, down to the servants' quarters, where it was told to Gertie Westbrooke, who had come to inquire for her.

"No, no, not dead; oh, what shall I do?" Gertie cried, as with a low moan she sank down upon the grass by the door, and covering her face with her hands wept passionately.

During the past year Edith and Gertie had met often by the grave which the child tended with so much care, and they had learned to know each other well. Together they had talked of French and music and the books which Gertie liked best and the flowers of which Gertie knew so much; and Edith had written to the white-haired old lady among the heather hills, and

sent the roses Gertie had pressed. And when the answer came which had in it a blessing for "the bonny lassie who looks after my puir laddie's grave," Edith read it to Gertie as they sat under the shadow of the whispering pine which grew above the grave. And now all this had come to an end, and all the brightness of Gertie's life seemed stricken out with the words :

"Mrs. Schuyler is dead."

"And she so lovely and good,—and she liked me, too. Oh, I cannot bear it,—I cannot !" Gertie sobbed, just as a footstep came near.

Looking up, she saw Emma, who, overhearing the words, and guessing at their meaning, said to her :

"Gertie, she is not dead. She has revived a little and is breathing still, though the doctor thinks her dying."

"Not dead ? Then there is hope ! Oh, Miss Emma, may I just look at her ? I'll be so very quiet, and I loved her so much !"

"Yes. I do not know as you can do any harm by looking at her," Emma said, and in an instant Gertie was flying up the stairs and along the south hall which led to Edith's room.

The door was open, and looking in, she saw the white face upon the pillow, framed in masses of golden-brown hair, which the fair hands had torn and matted when the iron fingers were at the throat. She seemed to be dead, and the doctor touched her pulse to see if it still beat, when the lips said faintly :

"Where's my little girl ?"

The last word was prolonged, and to the excited child it sounded like "little Gertie," and, without stopping to consider the consequences, Gertie darted across the floor to the side of the sick woman, whose lips she kissed, as she said :

"I'm here ! I'm here !"

"Go away !" came sternly from the wretched husband, who frowned darkly upon the girl thus audaciously disturbing his dying wife.

And with a frightened face Gertie started to obey him, when the physician interposed and stopped her, saying :

"Speak to her again."

His practised eye had detected a change in his patient when Gertie first spoke to her, and now, when at his command the silvery voice, so full of love and tender pathos, said, "I am here,—little Gertie. Do you know me, Mrs. Schuyler?" there certainly was a change, but whether from the effect of the powerful medicine given a few moments before as a last experiment, or because of that voice, which rang so clear and birdlike, I cannot tell. I only know something penetrated into the deep darkness, and brought back the senses almost gone forever. There was a fluttering of the eyelids; then they unclosed, and the eyes looked full at Gertie, while the lips whispered, "Stay!" and a hand moved slowly toward the child, who grasped it in her own, and held it fast, while Edith slept for a few moments.

"She is better,—she will live," the doctor said, as he met her look of recognition when her sleep was over. "Quiet now is what she needs."

And then Gertie started to leave the room, but the white fingers closed tightly round hers, and seeing that, Colonel Schuyler bade her stay.

So Gertie stayed that afternoon, and sat by Edith's side, and smoothed the tangled hair and bathed the pale forehead, and held the cooling drink to the parched lips; and once when the baby cried in the next room she went and took it up, and, soothing it into quiet, laid it back upon its dainty bed.

Gertie was a natural nurse, and she covered herself with so much glory that day at Schuyler Hill that the colonel himself unbent to her, and sent her home in his carriage because of a rain which was falling, and asked her to come again.

And Gertie went often during the weeks of Edith's illness, and the sick woman felt better and happier when Gertie was in the room beside her, where she could look at her and touch her if she chose. There had been consciousness for half an hour or more after the birth of her child, but instead of joy that "a man was born into the world," there had swept over her a wave of bitter anguish as she remembered the home in Dorset Street, and the other little one, of whom Colonel Schuyler never heard, and whose father slept under the evergreen which she could see

from her window nodding in the autumn wind, and bending toward her as it seemed in an attitude of menace.

They had brought her baby for her to see, but the touch of its hand on her cheek had awakened such intense love, and remorse, and pity and longing for the other child dead so long ago, that she had writhed in agony and pushed her boy away, while her wandering mind went far, far down into the deepest depths of darkness as she reviewed a page of her life which she had thought sealed forever. How awful were the hours of those days when the pine tree nodded and grinned and laughed and threw its long arms at her, and Abelard came and stood beside her with sad, reproachful eyes.

Oh, it was horrible, and from this horror Gertie's voice had called her back, and she clung to the young girl, and insisted upon having her with her as much as possible, and said to herself :

"It's because of her care for that grave that I love her so much ;" and when one day during her convalescence Gertie came to her and told her of Miss Armstrong's sudden illness, and that the school was closed indefinitely, and asked what she should do for a teacher, Edith considered for a moment, and then said :

"Go, please, to Colonel Schuyler's room, and ask him to come here, and you wait in the hall till you see him go out."

"What is it, darling? Can I do anything for you?" the colonel asked, as he bent over his wife.

"Yes, Howard," and Edith's white fingers strayed caressingly over his hair and forehead. "You know that,—that both of us feel as if I were indebted to Gertie Westbrooke for my life, and I wish to do her a favor. Will you say yes to it?"

"Certainly—certainly. Is it money?" the colonel asked, and Edith replied:

"No. Miss Armstrong's school is broken up, and Gertie has no teacher. She is a fine scholar, I hear, and anxious to learn. Let her come here every day and recite to Miss Brown-ing. Miss Alice has nearly finished her education, and will soon be gone. Shall it be so? May I tell her to come?"

There was a momentary hesitation on the colonel's part and then he answered :

" Yes, certainly, yes, let her come. You always had a *penchant* for this girl, and I must say she seems a very remarkable child."

And so it was settled that Gertie was henceforth to recite to Miss Browning, and though there was much opposition in the school-room, the colonel stood firmly to his decision, and one pleasant morning in October Gertie brought her books to Schuyler Hill and took the desk assigned her, far removed from her aristocratic companions, who at first scarcely noticed her by so much as a nod of recognition.

But as time went on her sweet temper and quiet, gentle demeanor insensibly won upon them, while they were surprised at her scholarship, so superior in some respects to their own that even Alice stooped more than once to ask information from her. Whatever Gertie undertook she did thoroughly, but her great success as a scholar was owing in part to the interest Robert Macpherson had evinced in her studies ever since he became an occupant of the cottage. He was away now on the Western prairies sketching the scenery there, and so Gertie was thrown upon her own resources ; but she was equal to the emergency, and studied early and late to overtake and surpass if possible, the young ladies who looked upon her so contemptuously. But for any coldness on their part she more than made amends in the extreme kindness with which Edith invariably treated her ; while the baby, who was called James for the colonel's father, was a constant source of delight.

Jamie was a beautiful child, with a mass of dark brown curls, and eyes like his father's ; and even Julia, who had from the first been opposed to his birth, and treated her step-mother with great coolness on account of it, softened toward him, and wrote to Miss Rossiter, who was now in New York, that " he really was a fine child, and that all things considered, she was quite reconciled to his birth, though she felt for Godfrey, who was no longer the only son."

The baby was a success, and no one seemed to love it more than Gertie Westbrooke. She was passionately fond of child

dren, and devoted herself so much to Jamie that he soon learned to know her, and would cry when she left his sight. And so it came about that she was much with Edith, who each day grew more and more interested in her, and more resolved to care for and befriend her in every possible way.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MARY ROGERS.

IT was a cold wintry night, and a February rain was beating against the windows of the house on the Hill, when Edith was roused from sleep by Norah, who said :

"If you please, Mrs. Schuyler, Gertie Westbrooke has come all alone from the cottage in the rain and dark, and says my cousin is dying and wants to see *you*. She's very bad, and talking such queer things."

Scarcely knowing what she was doing, Edith arose and began to dress, while the colonel followed more leisurely, feeling annoyed at Mary Rogers for being sick on such a night as this, and sending for his wife, thereby putting him to great discomfort and inconvenience, for if Edith went to the cottage he of course must go also. And in a short time they were in their carriage and driving rapidly down the road toward the house, where Gertie was anxiously expecting them.

As soon as she delivered her message she ran back through the darkness and rain, and when the carriage drew up before the gate she stood in the open doorway, her hair all wet and dripping, and her face pale with fear as she clutched Edith's dress, and whispered :

"I'm so glad you have come. She wanted you so much and said there was something she must tell you. But I'm afraid she can't now, because she's worse. She cannot talk. The doctor is there. I went for him first, and then back by the Hill. Come quick, please," and Gertie hurried her on to the apartment

where Mary Rogers lay, her face ashen pale, and her eyes fastening themselves with a look of intense longing and eagerness upon Edith as she came in. When a young girl Mrs. Rogers had suffered from an affection of the heart, which she supposed she had entirely outlived. Within the last few months, however, it had troubled her at intervals, and on the night of the severe attack she had told Gertie she was not well, and gone early to bed. Gertie, who slept upstairs, was awakened, she said, by loud groans, and hurrying to her auntie's room she found her on the floor, where she had fallen in her attempt to strike a light. Her first words after Gertie helped her back to bed were :

"I am going to die, and I must see Mrs. Schuyler and tell her something. Go for her quick, and the doctor, too, if you are not afraid."

She could talk then, but her powers of speech were gone now, and when Edith went up to her and said : "What can I do for you ?" her lips tried in vain to frame the words she would say, while great drops of sweat stood upon her face, wrung out by her intense desire to speak. It was hardly paralysis, or apoplexy either, the doctor said, but a kind of cross between the two, and while it left her mind perfectly clear, it took from her the power of utterance, and made her as helpless as a child.

"Can't you tell me what it is you wish to say to me ?" Edith asked, as she took the hand which was raised feebly to meet hers.

There was a shake of the head, and Edith continued : "Perhaps you can write it ?"

Another head shake, while the eager eyes went from Edith's face to Gertie, and from Gertie back again.

"I think I can guess," Edith said. "It is about Gertie. You wish to talk to me of her."

Then the quivering lips moved, and gave forth a sound which Edith knew meant "Yes," and she continued : "You are anxious about her future if you die ?"

Mrs. Rogers waited a moment and then nodded assent, while every muscle of her face worked painfully as she tried to speak

"Oh, auntie," Gertie cried, as she bent over the sick woman, "don't be troubled for me. I can take care of myself. I am strong and well and willing to work. I can find something to do, and everybody will be kind to me."

There were tears in Mary's eyes, and they rolled down her cheeks as she looked at the brave young girl, who was so sure of finding kindness in everybody.

Meanwhile Edith had been thinking, and as the result of her thought she said :

"Mrs. Rogers, will it comfort you to know that if you die Gertie shall come to live with me, and that I will take care of her?"

Then the quivering lips managed to say : "Yes," and feeling for Gertie's hand Mary put it in Edith's, and whispered "Yours," while the sweat drops on her face grew larger and thicker with her agonizing efforts to tell what she could not. How hard she tried to make them understand the secret she had kept so long, and once she took the shawl which lay near her, and folding it up to look like a child, she held it close to her bosom as a mother holds her baby, and then with her hand pointed to Gertie, and from her to Edith, mumbling the one word, "Yours, yours."

"What does she mean?" Edith asked in great perplexity. "It must be something about little Jamie,—that you will take care of him perhaps. Is that it?"

Mrs. Rogers' "No-o-o" came with a moaning cry, followed at last by the word "equal," spoken so plainly that there could be no mistake.

"Equal," Edith repeated, thoughtfully ; and then, as a sudden idea came into her mind, her face flushed a little, and, remembering the pride and haughtiness at Schuyler Hill, and the opposition she might have to encounter, she hesitated a moment before she asked : "You wish Gertie to come to me as an equal?"

There was a decided nod, and then Edith glanced at the beautiful girl beside her standing with clasped hands, her head bent forward to listen, with a look of surprise and wonder in

her eyes. That she should go to Schuyler Hill as anything *but* an equal had never occurred to her, and the question hurt her a little, and brought a flush of pride into her face as she waited Edith's reply.

"Surely, they can make no menial of her," Edith thought, as she looked again at the young girl just budding into womanhood, and resolving to brave everything she said, as if there had never been a doubt in her mind. "Certainly, Mrs. Rogers, she shall come as an equal, and have every possible advantage. I promise you that solemnly. Are you satisfied?"

Mary nodded, while her eyes still wore that look of intense longing, as if there was something more which she wished to tell. But she could not, though she kept repeating "*Yours, yours.*"

They could not guess her meaning, and thought her mind was wandering; but the motion of dissent she made when they hinted as much was a proof to the contrary.

Very sleepy, and uncomfortable, and a little impatient withal, Colonel Schuyler waited in the adjoining room, wholly unsuspecting of the compact which was to affect him so seriously. But Edith did not forget him, or that it was his right to have something to say on the matter; and when she saw the sick woman was quiet, she went out to him, and laying her arm caressingly across his neck, said:

"Howard, I have done something which I trust you will approve. That poor woman is distressed about leaving Gertie alone, and I have promised that she shall live with us."

"Certainly, if you wish it," the colonel said, thinking of Jamie, and how much he was attached to Gertie Westbrooke."

"Yes, but that is not all. I have promised to take her as an equal; not as a servant in any form. I am to treat her and educate her as if she were my sister. Are you willing, Howard? If not, say so at once, that I may take back my pledge for if she dies with my promise given, I must keep it to the letter. Are you willing, Howard?"

He did not know whether he was or not. He only knew that it was very disagreeable being turned out of bed at mid-

night and brought through the storm to this comfortless room, where the fire in the stove did not burn, and the one candle on the table ran up a huge black wick and smelled horribly of tallow; and then, to crown all, Edith must ask if he was willing to take into his family and treat as her sister a little obscure girl, whose mother took in fluting, and ironing, and mopping, too, for aught he knew, for a living. Yes, it was hard, and his eyebrows came together, and his hands went further into his pockets, while he sat a moment in silence. Then he said:

"Do you wish it very much?"

"Yes, I wish it," Edith said, "more than I have wished for anything in years."

"Then take her," was the response; and with a kiss of thanks, Edith went back to the sick-room where Mrs. Rogers was now asleep, with her head pillowed on Gertie's shoulder.

But the slumber did not last long, and when the gray, wet wintry morning looked into the room, Mary Rogers was dead, and what she had tried so hard to tell Edith Schuyler had not been told. Gertie's grief at first was wild and passionate, but Edith comforted her as best she could, and led her up to her own chamber, the little room where she once had dreamed of future happiness and then wept bitterly over its ruin.

As she entered the apartment and cast her eye upon the opposite wall, she started involuntarily, while the words rose to her lips, "How came *my* picture here?"

But it was "*La Sœur*," which Robert, who was in New York for the winter, had finished and given Gertie permission to hang in her room, and which at first struck Edith forcibly as a likeness of herself when, a girl of fifteen, she used to look from the windows of that room for the coming of Abelard. As she examined it more closely, however, the likeness faded, and she could not see Heloise Fordham in it as plainly as she did at first.

"Edith, my dear,—you really must go now. I cannot allow you to remain any longer," came from the foot of the stairs, where the colonel was standing, and with a kiss for the desolate child, and a promise to come again before the day was over.

and to send Norah to stay altogether till after the funeral, Edith joined her impatient lord and was driven rapidly home.

Nor did she return as she had promised, for exposure to the damp night air brought on a severe cold, which confined her to her room, where, on the day of the funeral, she sat looking wistfully in the direction of the cottage, where the hearse was standing before the gate, just as it stood that other day when hers was the only heart which ached for the burden it took away. It was the Schuyler carriage which took Gertie and Norah to the grave, and Edith blessed her husband for this kindness to the girl who was so much to her, and for his thoughtfulness in requesting his daughters and their governess to attend the funeral. He did it for her sake, she knew, and Julia knew so, too, and in Edith's hearing made some remarks about "the new element which was dragging her father down."

As yet she did not know that Gertie was coming to the Hill to live. Neither did any one, except Mrs. Tiffe, for Edith thought best not to speak of it during the two or three days when Norah remained at the cottage looking over her cousin's effects, packing away her things, and separating them from Gertie's.

In a small tin box, which fastened with a spring, they found several business-like documents, some yellow with age, some fresher-looking, and among them the papers relating to Gertie's "forty pounds." These Norah kept to give to Colonel Schuyler; then carelessly glancing at a few of the others, and finding them mostly receipts and papers relating to the bank, now good for nothing, she proposed to Gertie that they burn them. But Gertie said, "No, I may want to look at them some time;" so they were again placed back in the box, which was put away in Gertie's trunk and the house was set to rights, and the room which Robert Macpherson still kept for his studio when he was in Hampstead was left just as it was, with "*La Sœur*" removed to its old place on the easel, and at the close of the third day Norah locked the doors, and, with Gertie, passed out into the street, leaving tenantless the cottage for which Godfrey had never taken rent since Mrs. Rogers occupied it.

CHAPTER XXXV.

GERTIE AT THE HILL.

IT was known now, from Mrs. Tiffe, the housekeeper, down to Jennie, the scullion, that Gertie Westbrooke was to be an inmate of the household, but no one seemed to care particularly, unless it were Kitty, the laundress, who groaned over the extra washing, but consoled herself that the girl would not probably "wear as many frillicks and puffs as the young ladies did."

With regard in her exact position in the family the servants were at first in doubt, but guessed she was to be either second waiting-maid to their mistress or nurse to the baby, but of this opinion Edith, who overheard their conjectures, disabused them at once.

"Miss Westbrooke is *not* coming here as waitress or nurse," she said. "She comes as a young lady of the house, and as such you will treat her with deference and respect."

The servants glanced curiously at each other, and John, the table-waiter, said he knew now why Miss Julia looked so black at lunch, and whisked so spitefully out of the room.

Julia was furious, and when alone with her father spoke her mind freely to him, asking first if it were true, that Mrs. Schuyler had adopted Gertie Rogers, and was to bring her there to live.

"Not adopted; no, certainly not adopted her," the colonel said, apologetically, for there was something in his daughter's black eyes which made him wince a little. "That woman was anxious about her child's future, and Mrs. Schuyler,—or, rather, we promised to give her a home and an education, but there was no talk of adoption. No, certainly not."

He was careful to spare Edith as much as possible, and generously said *we*,—but Julia was not deceived, and answered, indignantly:

"What is Gertie Rogers and that woman to Mrs. Schuyler?"

Are they relatives of hers, that she has so persistently interested herself in them since she first came to Hampstead? It would certainly seem as if they were more than mere chance acquaintances, as she affirms."

"Julia, hush! I will hear no more!" the colonel said; but Julia would not stop, and continued, hotly:

"I wonder what my mother would say could she know the kind of society to which her children are subjected, and the danger threatening Godfrey."

"Godfrey!" the colonel repeated, in surprise; and Julia answered him:

"You must have been blind not to have seen the interest he has taken in Gertie Rogers ever since she came here. Why, she has even presumed to criticise his manners and his mode of talk; and he has promised to improve for *her* sake, and holds her up as a pattern for Alice and me to imitate. If he does this now, when she is in her proper place, what may he not do when he finds her here, an equal, and a daughter of the house, as I understand Mrs. Schuyler says she is to be. Possibly she may yet be the daughter really; and if so, you'll have yourself to thank."

Now, Julia had not the slightest fear for Godfrey, and the entire secret of her aversion to the child lay in the interest which Robert Macpherson manifested in her. From the first Julia had appropriated Robert to herself, and was fearfully jealous of any one who stood in her way in the least. She had quarrelled with Rosamond Barton because he once escorted her home from a party, and had refused to speak to Emma for an entire day when she found her in the summer-house alone with Robert, who was reading "Lady Geraldine's Love" to her; and though Gertie was a mere child, she was even jealous of her because of Robert's interest in her, and the unbounded praise he so unhesitatingly bestowed upon her. He thought her face the most beautiful he had ever seen, and he had painted her portrait and called it "*La Sœur*," and spoke of her so often in Julia's presence that she began to hate the girl, who had heretofore been only indifferent to her as one beneath her notice;

and now she was to become an inmate of the family, where Mr. Macpherson would meet her on terms of equality when he came back to Hampstead in the spring; and this was the cause of Julia's anger, and the reason why she dared talk as she did to her father, who was made quite as uncomfortable as she wished him to be.

Perhaps it was an unwise thing to bring Gertie into the house on terms of equality. She was very pretty. She would, of course, grow prettier with years, while Godfrey was headstrong and impetuous, and might be led to do her harm by attentions which to him would mean nothing, but would, nevertheless, be much to her. The colonel tried to believe that it was only for Gertie that he anticipated harm. Godfrey would never be in earnest, and, consequently, no serious injury could accrue to him, except, indeed, the moral one of deceiving and playing with the feelings of another. The real hurt would fall on Gertie, and for her sake it might have been better if he had left her where she was. Thus Colonel Schuyler reasoned after Julia left him to his own reflections, which finally assumed the conviction that Edith had been foolish, if not unreasonable, to wish Gertie to come there, and he unwise to permit it. But it was too late now. She was expected that very afternoon, and as he went up to look at his boy before going into town, he stumbled over dustpan and broom which were standing before the door of the room opposite Edith's, and which he knew was to be Gertie Westbrooke's. Glancing in, he saw a bright fire in the grate, and a pretty bouquet of flowers on the dressing-table, while Edith herself was arranging the chairs and curtains and ornaments upon the mantel.

"Edith, what are *you* doing here in this cold room?" he said, rather sharply.

He had never spoken to her in this tone of voice, and she turned toward him with a look of surprise in her face as she replied:

"It is not cold; the fire has been kindled some time, and I wanted to see that Gertie's room was all right. I am so sorry for her, and wish her to feel at home."

"Yes, certainly ; but, Edith,—Mrs. Schuyler,—my dear,—are you not in danger of spoiling her by making so much of her. You could hardly do more if she were Alice herself, and such people do not often bear sudden elevation."

"Oh, Howard, what do you mean ? You are not sorry we gave her a home ?" Edith said, in much perplexity at his manner, as she followed him into the nursery.

"No, not exactly that, certainly not ; under the circumstances we could hardly have done otherwise than to give her a home, but we might have stopped there ; we need not have made her one of the family, and our having done so may be productive of a great deal of harm. My daughter Julia is already in open rebellion, and has said things which disturb me very much."

"Julia," Edith began, indignantly, but checked herself at once, as she met the questioning look in her husband's eyes, and saw the meeting together of his eyebrows.

Julia had been her only *bête noir* since the departure of Miss Rossiter, and though they were outwardly extremely polite to each other, Edith knew that she was looked upon by the young lady as an intruder and adventuress, and that the slightest provocation on her part would fan the smouldering fire into a flame.

Not a hint of this, however, had she ever given her husband, who, as she stopped suddenly, said :

"You were going to speak of Julia."

"Nothing of any consequence," she replied, "except that I will keep Gertie out of her way as much as possible."

"Yes, certainly, and now I must go. I have an appointment in town. There's the carriage at the door. Good-by."

He kissed her forehead and stooped to kiss his boy, when Edith said hesitatingly :

"By the way, Howard, would you mind driving round by the cottage on your way home and bringing Gertie with you ? The snow is so deep and the walking so bad."

"I shall not have time," he answered, a little stiffly, as he buttoned his overcoat, "and then, you forget that such people do not mind mud and snow. They are used to it."

He was gone before Edith could utter a word, and with a swelling heart she watched him driving down the avenue, and then bending over the cradle of her boy, she shed the first really bitter tears she had known since coming to Schuyler Hill. It is true she had received insolence from Miss Rossiter, coldness from Julia, and indifference from Alice; but these had weighed little when her husband's uniform kindness and consideration were in the opposite scale, and now it seemed as if he, too, were against her, and for a time she cried silently, wondering if she had done wrong to befriend the orphan girl, and if her coming there would be the beginning of discord between herself and husband.

"Mrs. Schuyler, please, may I come in? It's I,—Gertie," a soft voice said at the door; and starting up Edith went to meet the young girl, and winding her arms around her, kissed her lovingly, while all doubts of right and wrong were swept away with her first glance into the bright, innocent face, and the soft blue eyes looking at her so wonderingly.

Gertie had never expected the carriage to come for her. As the colonel said, she was accustomed to mud and snow, and had walked to the Hill and entered at the side door with Norah, who, knowing the position she was to occupy in the house, took her up stairs at once, and, pointing out her room, left her, while she went to change her wet shoes and stockings. But Gertie could not believe this pretty room was intended for her. There must be some mistake, she thought; and, seeing the door opposite slightly ajar, and knowing it led into the nursery, and that Mrs. Schuyler was probably there, she ventured to knock and ask if she might enter. There was something peculiarly restful about Gertie,—something mesmeric in her presence, which everybody felt for good, and which affected Edith at once, making her forget for a moment her husband's words and manner.

"I am so glad to have you here, and this *is* your room," she said, as she led her into her pleasant chamber. "I wanted you near me and baby, he is so fond of you."

She removed Gertie's hood and cloak, and smoothed her rip

pling hair, and thought how pretty she was in black, and wondered where she had seen an expression like that which flashed into the blue eyes and spread over the bright face at her caresses.

It was an hour before dinner, and Gertie spent the time with Edith and in playing with little Jamie, who, at sight of her, gave a coo of delight, and nearly jumped into her arms. He was an active, playful child, and Gertie was sorry when the nurse came to take him, telling Mrs. Schuyler dinner was ready. This was an ordeal Gertie dreaded, and in a kind of nervous terror she cried, "Oh, Mrs. Schuyler, I wish I did not have to go down. Can't I stay here and eat by myself?"

"Certainly not," Edith replied, knowing the while that such a thing would be highly satisfactory to one of the young ladies, at least, and possibly to her husband, but, nevertheless, being fully resolved that every privilege of the house, whether great or small, should be awarded to her *protégée*. "Certainly not, you are one of us now. You are *my* little girl;" and she passed her arm caressingly around the child. "Watch me, if you like, and do what you see me do."

Thus reassured, Gertie entered the long dining-room with as much self-possession as if she had done the same thing every day of her life.

"Oh, Gertie, how do you do? And so you are come to live with us," Emma said, kindly, as she came in, and offering her hand she took her seat at the table, and did not once seem to look at Gertie, whose feelings she wished to spare as much as possible.

With Julia it was different. She called herself a lady, versed in every point of politeness and breeding, and yet she could deliberately stoop to wound a girl who had never injured her, and whose only crime was her poverty. Arrayed in her longest train of dark blue silk, her hair in the very latest style, as reported by Alice Creighton, who was then in New York, she swept haughtily into the room, and with a slight inclination of her head to Edith, and a slighter one to Gertie, took her seat, and while the soup, which she never took, was serving, occu

pied herself with a French novel, occasionally fixing her eyes upon Gertie, who was made very uncomfortable in consequence.

Colonel Schuyler had not yet returned from town, but he came before dinner was over. He was very sorry for the ungraciousness of his manner when talking with his wife of Gertie, and the pained expression of her face had haunted him all the afternoon, and been the cause of his driving round by the cottage on his way home.

"I can at least do that," he thought; "and the roads are worse than I supposed."

But the cottage was empty, and the colonel drove home alone, resolving to be very kind to the orphan girl for Edith's sake and conquer all his fears for Godfrey until he saw something tangible, when it would be time to act. So when he entered the dining-room and met Gertie's eyes raised so timidly to his, he went to her, and offering her his hand, bade her welcome to his house, and said:

"I drove to the cottage for you, but was too late. I fear you found the walking very bad?"

She had not minded it, she said, while the beaming glance which Edith gave him told him that his peace was made with her, and he became exceedingly urbane, and even talkative, and addressing some pleasant remarks to Gertie, made her feel more at ease, if possible, than Edith's reassuring words had done. She was very pretty, and graceful, and modest, and he watched her movements with an interest he could not define, and compared her with Alice Creighton and his own daughters, who, so far as beauty was concerned, fell far in the scale.

Emma was very kind to her, and paid her several little attentions during the evening, but Julia preserved the same haughty demeanor she had at first assumed, and never spoke to her or noticed her in any way. When she had once conceived a prejudice, it was very strong, and that night, after retiring to her room, she wrote to her aunt Christine of this "last indignity put upon them," and wished that she was emancipated from school like Alice, and could leave the home which seemed like home

no longer. On the receipt of this letter Miss Rossiter wrote to her brother-in-law, saying she had heard of his kindness in giving Gertie Westbrooke a home until something could be done for her, and adding that she had in her mind a plan which would relieve him of the girl and benefit the child as well. She was wanting a little maid to be with her constantly, and Gertie would do nicely after a little training.

"I believe your wife has some Quixotic idea of educating her," she added, in conclusion, "and without giving my opinion in full with regard to elevating that class of people, I will say that if the girl comes to me I shall myself teach her an hour each day, which I consider all that is necessary, with what she already knows. I hope you will send her as soon as possible, for Alice is to stay with me through Lent so as to be near St. Alban's, and between us we shall need an extra maid."

What effect this letter would have had upon the colonel had he received it under ordinary circumstances, I do not know. As it was, it remained unopened for many days, while in an agony of anxiety he watched his baby boy, who lay almost constantly in Gertie's arms, its little hand holding fast to hers as if fearful of losing her. It was scarlet fever in its most malignant form, and at the very first alarm, Julia, who was afraid of disease in any form, fled to her own chamber, where, like a true niece of her aunt, she burned *tar* and kept chloride of lime as a disinfectant, and never went near the room where her baby brother was dying. Even the wet-nurse shrank from the fever-smitten child, fearing for the safety of her own little nurseling. But Gertie knew no fear, and from the moment little Jamie opened his heavy eyes at the sound of her voice, and raised his hands to her with the shadow of a smile on his face, she stood by him day and night and held him at the very last upon her lap, hers the last voice which spoke words of endearment to him, and hers the last lips which touched his in life, for Edith was fainting in the adjoining room, and the colonel in his anxiety for her did not know the end had come till he saw Gertie fold the child to her breast, while amid a ruin of tears she said: "Poor Jamie

is in heaven now ;” then she laid him gently back in his crib, and the colonel knew his boy was dead.

They telegraphed for Godfrey, and the house was hung with mourning, and Julia stayed in her room and wondered if she would have to wear black, and Emma cried herself sick, and Edith sat motionless as a stone beside her dead baby, with a look of unutterable anguish on her face and no power to speak even had she wished it, for the iron hand was on her throat, and her heart was breaking for more than the dead child beside her.

Who had tended the death-bed of that other one ? Who had folded the little hands upon the bosom as Jamie’s were folded ? Who had curled the rings of golden hair as Jamie’s were curled ? And who had kissed the pretty lips as she kissed these before her ? Nobody,—nobody. Hospital nurses had no time for tears or caresses ; strangers had buried her baby girl, and she, the mother, had made no sign, either then or since, and God was punishing her for it, and her heart was broken in twain as she sat, white, and still, and speechless, while her husband tried to comfort her.

Then it was that Gertie thought of everything. Gertie carried messages to and from Miss Julia, who unbent to her now that she could make her useful ; Gertie comforted poor Emma ; Gertie anticipated the colonel’s wishes before they were spoken, and Gertie took the white flowers from the conservatory, and putting them on baby’s pillow, laid her hand pityingly on the bowed head of Edith, who moved at the touch, and looking up, saw the flowers upon the pillow and the girl who had laid them there. Then the iron hand relaxed a little and Edith gasped, “ Oh, Gertie, my child, my little one,” while the first tears she had shed began to fall like rain and her body shook with sobs, which did her good, for she was better after the outburst, though she would not leave the room until her husband took her away and put her in her bed, where she lay utterly helpless and prostrate while they buried her boy from her sight.

Godfrey came to the funeral and saw his little brother first in his coffin, and was very decorous, and grave, and kind to both his sisters, and respectful to his father, and solicitous about

Edith, and attentive to Gertie, whom he called the sunbeam in the house.

"I don't know what we should do without you now, and I am so glad you are here," he said to her, on the morning after the funeral, when he stood with her a moment by the window of the drawing-room, and thought how pretty she was, and how womanly she had grown within the last six months.

"How old are you, Gertie?" he asked; and when she told him fourteen last January, he continued: "Almost a young lady. I shall have to hurry up and get to be that perfect gentleman whom you are to reward with a kiss, or you will be refusing to pay; eh, Gertie?"

He spoke playfully and laid his hand lightly on her hair, while a beautiful blush broke over the face which was upturned to his, when a stern voice called:

"Godfrey, my son, I want you;" and Colonel Schuyler stood in the door, with a stern look of disapproval in his eyes.

The colonel had read Miss Rossiter's letter that morning, and tearing it in a dozen pieces, had answered, saying that the girl who had been so much to his lost boy, and was so much to his dear wife, would henceforth be his special care, and that if Miss Christine wanted a waiting-maid she must look elsewhere, as she could not have Gertie Westbrooke. This letter he had sent to the post; nor was he sorry for it even when he came so unexpectedly upon his son and fancied far more than he saw.

Gertie was too closely connected with his dead boy for him to cast her off; but he could not keep her there, and on the instant he formed the plan that she should be educated away from Schuyler Hill, where Godfrey could not see her until matters between him and Alice were finally adjusted, and he had outgrown any boyish fancy he might entertain for this child.

He had meant at first to keep Godfrey for a few days, but he sent him back at once, and as soon as Edith could bear it, told her of his decision with regard to Gertie, and told her in such a way that she did not venture to oppose him, though her heart ached with a new pain as she thought of losing the girl who seemed so very near to her. After many inquiries it was de-

cided that the Misses H——'s school in Buffalo was the place for Gertie, inasmuch as the training there was very thorough; and when in the spring Godfrey came home for a short vacation, bringing Macpherson with him, he was told that Gertie was in Buffalo fitting for a teacher.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AFTER FOUR YEARS.

“Silently as the spring-time
Its crown of verdure weaves,
And all the trees, on all the hills,
Open their thousand leaves”—

O, silently fled the next four years, and I come now to the glorious day when summer was everywhere, from the perfume of the new-mown hay on the lawn to the golden flecks of sunshine on the river, and the musical hum of happy animal life heard on every side.

I had been an invalid for a long time, and had mingled but little with the outer world. With the affairs at Schuyler Hill, however, I was pretty well acquainted, for Edith and I were great friends now. At first she had stood aloof from me, but when she heard of my illness, she came at once, and, with kind words and many delicate attentions, made my life far happier than it could have been without her. After the little grave was made under the evergreen and Gertie went away, she came to me oftener, and, during the long rides which we took together in her pretty phaeton, she told me much of her life at Schuyler Hill. A very happy life it had been for the most part, though it had its dark side, as what life has not? Miss Rossiter had been a trouble while she stayed, and, even after she was gone, her influence was felt in Julia's fitful moods and peculiar temper after the receipt of the letters, in which allusions were always made to “that woman who has usurped your poor dear mother's place.”

And still Miss Rossiter came every summer to the Hill, and stayed a month or six weeks, and took upon herself such insufferable airs that Edith was glad when she was gone, and made the day of her departure a sort of jubilee.

Julia was now nearly twenty-two, and very handsome it was thought, though her beauty was of that dark, bold, dashing style which I did not admire. Emma, with her paleness and light brown hair, suited me better; for there was a sweet, gentle expression in her face, while in grace of manner and form she far excelled her haughty sister, who patronized her generally.

Since their coming out neither of the young ladies had been much at home, and we missed the style, and dash, and city airs which they used to bring us, and had only Rosamond Barton and Mrs. Schuyler to admire and copy,—except, indeed, on the rare occasions when Gertie was allowed to pass her vacations in Hampstead. I say *allowed*, for the colonel managed so adroitly that she never came to Schuyler Hill when Godfrey was there or expected, but spent her vacations elsewhere in happy ignorance of the real reason for her banishment.

And so we did not see her often in our quiet town; but when we had her with us it was a season of rejoicing, and we made the most of it. How I used to wait and listen for the rapid step and the clear, ringing voice, which always set my heart throbbing, and did me so much good. I did not wonder that everybody loved her, from old Mrs. Vandeusenhsen in the Hollow, to Tom Barton on the Ridge, and when the former brought me fresh eggs for my breakfast, and told me with a beaming face that “her young lady came home last night looking handsomer than ever,” I knew she meant Gertie Westbrook; and when Tom Barton looked in and said, with a falter in his voice, “She went this morning,” I knew that he meant Gertie, too, and pitied him for the hope he was cherishing, and which I was sure would never be fulfilled.

Since the memorable day when Mary Rogers spoke so boldly for the child whom she would not have compromised by so much as a breath of gossip, Tom Barton had kept his promise, and guarded the little girl as carefully as if she had been his

sister, until she ceased to be a little girl, and he saw her in all the bright loveliness of sixteen, and then Tom went down before her charms, and asked her to quit school, and be his wife, and live with him at the Ridge, and snub Miss Julia Schuyler as she had been snubbed by her.

"No, Mr. Barton, I cannot be your wife. No girl would be that, if she loved you ever so much," Gertie had answered, fearlessly, while Tom blushed painfully, and knew just what she meant, and swore he would reform, and not look so much like a walking beer-barrel.

And he did try to reform, and took the pledge, and broke it in three weeks, and had the delirium tremens, and saw all manner of snakes twisting themselves around Gertie Westbrooke, on whom he called piteously in his agony. Then he took the pledge again, and kept it, and gradually the high color left his face, and his figure began to assume a better shape, and his clothes were not so tight, and he came to see me so often that the meddlesome ones in town wondered if old Ettie Armstrong could be foolish enough to think that boy wanted anything of her !

"Why, she is forty at least," good Mrs. Smithers said, averring that she knew, because the day I was born their bees swarmed, and her husband broke his neck trying to saw off the limb where they had settled.

Of course such evidence was unanswerable, but as I knew just how old I was, and why Tom Barton visited me so often, I did not care to contradict the story of the bees, and I let Tom Barton come whenever he pleased to talk of his "best girl," as he called her, and to keep him from the "Golden Eagle," the low tavern where he had slipped so often.

At last, however, Gertie's education was finished, and she came home to stay, and the colonel welcomed her kindly, and thought how beautiful she was, and felt his blood stir a little when she raised herself on tip-toe and kissed him as a matter of course. Julia never did that and Emma but seldom, while Edith kept most of her kisses now for the two-year-old boy Arthur, so that the cold, reserved man was not much used to

kisses of late, and felt the touch of Gertie's lips for hours, and caught himself contrasting her with Alice Creighton, whom he had last seen so elaborately dressed with powder on her face and every hair seeming to stand on end. But thirty thousand a year covers many defects, and Alice was still the colonel's ideal of a daughter-in-law when he welcomed Gertie home.

She had been there three months, and on the June morning of which I write I was going up to call upon her for the first time since her return. I found her in the garden, in her big sun-hat and heavy gloves, cutting and arranging flowers with which to decorate the house, for a party of young people was coming from New York that day, and everything and everybody was in a great state of expectancy. During the last year and a half Robert Macpherson had been in Europe looking after his inheritance, which by the death of some one had come indisputably to him at last. Several times he had written to Godfrey urging him to cross the ocean with his sisters and Miss Creighton, and visit him in his Highland home; and as nothing could please the young ladies better, the party had sailed for Europe in time to keep the Easter festival at *Glenthorpe*, Robert's handsome country-seat. But they had now returned to New York, and Robert Macpherson was with them, and for a week or more they had been stopping with Miss Rossiter and waiting for Rosamond Barton, who was to accompany them to Hampstead. It was two years since Godfrey was graduated, and since that time he had been studying his profession in the city until he went with his sisters for a short vacation to Europe.

"Only think, I have not seen Godfrey for more than four years, and have almost forgotten how he looks," Gertie said, after welcoming me to the garden, and telling me of the expected guests. "It is queer that I have not seen him, but he never happened to be home when I was," she continued, as she gathered up the bouquets and went with me to the house, where she began to distribute the flowers, putting the most, I noticed, in Godfrey's room, and seeming more interested in that than in all the others.

Edith was in her nursery, and when Gertie's decorations were

completed and she came and stood by her, I was struck as I had been more than once before by their resemblance to each other.

They certainly might have been sisters, though Gertie was in her sweet spring-time and Edith in the fulness of her summer. Time had dealt lightly with her, and she looked scarcely older than when she came a bride to Schuyler Hill. She was very happy, too, though I saw she dreaded the coming of the young people from New York. But not for herself. She had reached a height where neither Alice's haughtiness, nor Julia's arrogance, nor Miss Rossiter's insolence, could touch her. She was only anxious for Gertie, who might be treated coldly, if not rudely, by some of the party. And when she remembered the fear which had for so many years influenced every act of her husband toward Gertie, and, looking at the beautiful girl, remembered what Godfrey was, she trembled, notwithstanding the piece of news which she had heard the previous night, and which she communicated to me, with Gertie sitting in the deep window fanning herself with her garden hat, and rubbing the scratch she had received among the roses.

"By the way," Edith said, "the colonel had a letter from Godfrey last night, and it seems the engagement he has so long desired has at last come about."

"Whose engagement?" I asked.

"Godfrey's and Miss Creighton's."

"I supposed that was settled long ago."

"It was by the parents, but not by the parties most interested. Godfrey has never manifested any great degree of fervor, and has rather made light of it, I think; but it is done now, and they will be married as soon as he gets his profession, possibly sooner. The colonel is greatly rejoiced."

I glanced at Gertie, still rubbing and blowing the scratch on her hand, but if the news of Godfrey's approaching marriage produced any effect upon her it was not visible. Her bright color was just as bright and her blue eyes just as placid in their expression, unless, indeed, there was a little wonder in them as she looked up quickly and said:

"A newly engaged couple,—won't that be nice? How do you suppose Mr. Godfrey will act as an engaged man? I always think of him as a boy, and still he must be twenty-four."

And yet in her heart there was a shadow of regret that Godfrey should be wasted upon Alice Creighton, who never liked her, and who might make Godfrey dislike her, too.

"She shall not do that," she thought, when alone in her own room she was reflecting upon the news which had dimmed somewhat the brightness of the day. "I'll be so kind and good to her that she cannot help liking me, and so I'll gain her friendship instead of losing Godfrey's."

With this end in view, she transferred a part of the flowers from Godfrey's room to that of his *fiancée*, where she rearranged the furniture, and into which she brought her own handsome reading chair, Edith's gift on her last birthday. Remembering Alice's indolent, lounging habits, and how much she was addicted to what Godfrey called "lying around loose," she knew the chair would just suit the languid little lady, and placed it by the window where the finest view of the river was to be had. Later in the day she dressed herself for the evening and wore her prettiest white muslin, with the fluted ruffles and ribbons of blue, and then went down to the piazza where the colonel and Edith were waiting for their guests.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE TRAVELLERS,

ERE Miss Creighton, Miss Schuyler, Miss Emma Schuyler, Miss Barton, Godfrey, Robert and Tom; and they made a very merry party as they entered the car at the Thirty-first Street station, and with their dash and style and self-assurance of manner seemed to take entire possession of the road and ignore the presence of every one.

"Three gentlemen to four ladies; that's lucky for one of us," Tom Barton said, as he quietly appropriated his sister and

Emma Schuyler to himself, leaving Julia as a matter of course to Robert Macpherson, and Alice to her betrothed.

Good-natured Tom did not care a picryune with whom he talked or sat, so long as he knew he was to dine at Schuyler Hill, and see Gertie with the wonderful eyes and hair, and the shy drooping of her lids and the bright color coming and going in her face just as it did when she told him there was no hope, but bade him be a man all the same for her sake and the sake of the fair girl he would find some day to take her place in his heart. Tom knew he shouldn't find the girl, but he was trying to be a man, and even Julia Schuyler tolerated him now, and divided her coquetries between him and Robert Macpherson, who was unusually quiet and studied the scenery from the window more than he did the dark, handsome face beside him.

Alice was satisfied to talk with Godfrey, and no one in the car who watched her could help guessing what he was to her, or that she was more delighted with the state of affairs than he. Alice was not Godfrey's choice, though he was engaged to her, and had been for four days, during which time she had made the most of her new dignity, and shown her lover to as many of her friends as possible, and chosen her own engagement ring, and looked at a corner house far up town, which she wished Godfrey to secure at any cost, as her heart was set upon it. And Godfrey acquiesced in everything, and got the refusal of the house, and went with her to look at some rare bronzes and a \$5,000 painting, on which her heart was also set, and played the devoted lover as well as he could, with no shadow of genuine love in the whole affair so far as he was concerned. How he came to be engaged he hardly knew, except that his father desired it, while Alice herself expected it, and people had talked of it so long that he had gradually come to consider it as something he must take as a matter of course, just as he took the measles, and the mumps, and the chicken-pox. And yet it was very sudden at the last. "A word and a blow," he said to Robert, who asked why he looked so white when, after the deed was done, he went to call on his friend at the hotel.

"White," Godfrey replied. "I guess you'd be white, too, if

you'd been and gone and got engaged as I have ! Why, Bob, I feel as I did when I was a little shaver, and swallowed a rusty copper, and Aunt Christine slapped me on the back, till the copper flew half-way across the room, and I was black as your hat. I say, Bob, hit me a cut or two, and see if I can't throw this up."

With a merry laugh Robert replied :

"I don't believe you'll throw up thirty thousand a year as easily as you did the rusty copper ; but tell me about it. How did it happen, and when ?"

"Why, you see," Godfrey rejoined, "I always supposed it would have to come, father was so anxious, and mother, too, before she died ; but I guess a chap is never in a hurry to take what he is sure of, and I've staved it off, and never even looked love at her, except in a joking way, until this morning, when I went to call upon her at Uncle Calvert's, and found her so pale and pensive, the result of that abominable sea-sickness, from which you know she suffered the voyage home. Now there is nothing strikes to my stomach quite so quick as sea-sickness, and I felt sorry for her, and when she told me how lonesome she was at Uncle Calvert's, with the everlasting din of those street cars in her ears, and cried a little, why, I—I—I began to feel kind of, well, just as any chap would feel sitting by a nice girl, who, he knows, expects to marry him, with a tear running down the side of her nose, and so it was very easy for me to pick up her fat, white hands,—she *has* pretty hands,—and pat them a little, and say : 'Suppose we get married, Alice, and then you can live with me, and not have to stay in this poky house. Shall we, Alice?'"

"'Yes, Godfrey,' she said, and then,—well, I'll leave something to your imagination, only the thing is settled, and we are to go to Tiffany's this afternoon and get the ring, and to-morrow we look at that show-house up town, which Larkin built and failed in, and I am to write to father, and the news will be over Hampstead when we get there, and I feel, as I told you, much as I did when I swallowed the cent !"

This was Godfrey's account of his engagement, from which

the reader will infer that so far as his heart was concerned there was very little of it in the matter. But he did not love any one else, and that was in Alice's favor ; and she managed him so adroitly that he made a very well behaved lover, deferring to all her wishes, and treating her with attention, and even a show of tenderness when they were alone.

Once, on the day before they went to Hampstead, Robert said to him :

"By the way, Schuyler, is '*La Sœur*' at the Hill?"

"'*La Sœur*!' Gertie, you mean," Godfrey replied. "I really do not know whether she has left school or not. Nobody ever mentions her in any of their letters, and I've lost track of her entirely. I wrote to her two or three times when she first went off to school, but she did not answer, and so I gave it up. Why, it's four years and a half since I saw her. She must be a young lady by this time. I say, Bob, do you suppose she is as sweet and pretty now as she was when you painted that picture? I thought her then the daintiest creature I had ever seen."

Before Robert could reply there was a knock on the door, and Tom Barton was ushered in. He had come from Hampstead by the morning train, and called to see his old friends when he learned where they were. With Gertie fresh in his mind, Godfrey said to him :

"Barton, do you know if that little girl we almost pulled caps over once is at the Hill now?"

"Do you mean Miss Westbrooke?" Tom said, in a tone which made Godfrey turn quickly to look at him, while a suspicion which hurt him strangely flashed through his mind.

"Yes, I mean Miss Westbrooke. She is a young lady now, I suppose. Is she at home, and pretty as ever?"

Tom had heard from his sister of Godfrey's engagement, and as the world had long ago given Robert Macpherson to Julia Schuyler, he had nothing to dread from either, and launched forth at once into praises of Gertie Westbrooke, the most beautiful creature upon whom the sun ever shone, as well as the purest, and sweetest, and best.

"Why, there is not a man, woman, or child in Hampstead that would not fall down and worship her if she wished it."

"Upon my word, Tom, you must be far gone," Godfrey said, with that little *hurt* still in his heart. "I should not wonder if you and I were in the same boat, eh?"

He looked curiously at Tom, who answered him frankly and sadly withal :

"No, Godfrey, she won't have a drunken dog like me. She told me so herself,—not in those words, to be sure, but in the sweet, gentle way she has of telling the truth for one's good. I swore then I'd reform, and I have not been drunk in a year, and if I ever am a man again, it will be Gertie Westbrooke who saved me, Heaven bless her!"

There was a tremor in Tom's voice as he said this, and then added, abruptly :

"Yes, she's at the Hill. You'll see her when you get home."

And so when Godfrey sat at last in the railway car beside his betrothed, to whom he paid the attentions she required of him, his thoughts were not so much with her as with the girl at Schuyler Hill, whom every man, woman and child admired, if Tom's word was to be trusted. Alice, too, thought of her, and calling across the aisle to Julia, asked :

"Is that Westbrooke girl at Schuyler Hill?"

"I believe so," Julia replied, adding, as she saw the look of interest in Robert's face : "I think she is a kind of companion for Mrs. Schuyler, and will, perhaps, be little Arthur's governess. You know father educated her for a teacher?"

"I saw her last winter," Rosamond Barton said ; "and really, girls, she has the most beautiful face and form I ever looked at. Everything about her is perfect. You'll have to paint her again, Mr. Macpherson. Your first picture does not do her justice now."

Robert bowed, while Julia said, snappishly :

"Indeed, I am most anxious to behold this paragon. I have not seen her either for two years or more. She had a very red nose then."

"Yes, but it came from a bad cold," Emma quickly inter-

posed, ready now as ever to defend the right ; and then the conversation touching Gertie ceased, and a few moments after the whistle sounded, and the party had reached the Hampstead station.

They walked to the house, and Gertie watched them as they came up the avenue,—Tom, Rosamond and Emma, Robert Macpherson and Julia, and lastly Godfrey and Alice, he carrying her shawl and travelling satchel, and she looking up into his face in that matter-of-course, assured kind of way she had assumed since her engagement.

But Godfrey had other occupation than attending to her and her pretty coquetries. His eyes had travelled up the road, across the lawn to the broad piazza, and the young girl standing there, clothed in white, with the blue ribbons round her waist and the bright hair on her neck. And that he knew was Gertie ; not much taller than when he saw her last, but grown and rounded into beautiful womanhood, which showed itself even at that distance, though not in all its fulness. That came to him when at last he stood with her hand in his looking into her upturned face and drinking in with every glance fresh draughts of her wondrous beauty, which so bewildered and intoxicated him that until Alice spoke to him twice and asked for her satchel he did not hear her. Then releasing Gertie's hand, he turned to Alice and said :

"I beg your pardon. I did not know you were speaking to me."

Then he kissed Edith, and tossed little Arthur in his arms, and shook his father's hand, and greeted the servants with his old freedom and kindness of manner, while Gertie stood just where he left her, thinking how differently it had all happened from what she had expected.

Mr. Macpherson had been glad to see her, and had shown it, and so had Emma and Rosamond, while Alice had offered her two fingers, and said, in a formal way, "Happy to meet you," and Julia had offered one finger with a nod and a "how d'ye do, Gertie," but Godfrey had not said *one word* ! He had merely taken her hand and held it, and looked at her, not quite

as friend looks at friend after an absence of years, but in a way which puzzled and perplexed her, and made her heart throb quickly, and the color deepen on her cheeks. How handsome he was, and how changed in some respects from the tall, slender youth, who seemed all legs and arms, but who now in the fulness of manhood was not one inch too tall. All the lankness of his boyhood was gone, but the grace and suppleness remained, and his erect form and square shoulders would have become the finest officer that ever drilled his pupils at West Point. On the face, once so smooth and fair, there was a rich brown beard now, and the hair had taken a darker tinge, and curling a little at the ends lay in thick masses around his broad white brow. Even his eyes were softened, though they still brimmed with fun and mischief, and tenderness, too, as Gertie knew when they were gazing into hers.

“What do you think of Godfrey?”

It was Tom Barton who asked the question, and starting from her dreamy attitude, Gertie replied :

“I think him the most splendid-looking man I ever saw.”

“That’s so,” Tom answered, warmly, while Gertie, who had no wish to talk with him further then, passed into the house and went to her own room.

It was six o’clock, and with a hasty glance at herself in the mirror, and a thought that her personal appearance mattered nothing to any one, she went down to the parlor, where the family usually assembled before going in to dinner. They were all there now, talking and laughing in little groups, except Godfrey, who stood apart from the others, leaning his elbow on the mantel and watching the door as if expecting some one to enter. He had mentally commented on the ladies as they came in, pronouncing Edith beautiful, Julia handsome, Emma graceful and stylish, Rosamond pretty and sweet, and Alice *stunning* and fashionable ; and now he was waiting for the girl in the simple white muslin, who came at last, without the aid of Parisian toilet or ornament of any kind, and eclipsed the whole, just as the morning sun obscures the daylight and makes itself the centre of light and glory. There was no shadow of

embarrassment perceptible as she entered the parlor, but her manner was that of a daughter of the house rather than an inferior, as she crossed the long room and joined the group by the bay window. There was a supercilious stare from Julia, a little nod from Alice, and a welcoming smile from Edith, Emma, and Rosamond; and then the conversation flowed on again until the dinner-bell rang, and the party filed off in pairs to the dining-room. As a matter of course, Godfrey took Alice, while Julia fell naturally to Robert, and Tom was left with three girls on his hands.

"I can't beau you all, so I guess I'll take my pick," he said, as he offered his arm to Gertie, while his sister and Emma followed behind.

And so it came about that Tom was seated between Gertie and Julia Schuyler, who, not satisfied with the attentions of Mr. Macpherson, tried her best to attract Tom also, and keep him from talking to Gertie.

"Not any wine?" she said, as he drew his glass away when the decanter was passed. "That is something new. You'll surely take a little with me. It is some of father's very best."

Tom knew that as well or better than she did, and the smell and the demon in the cup moving itself upright was tempting him sorely, while Julia's seductive smile and words of entreaty were more than he could endure, and forgetting what even a taste involved he raised the glass, while Rosamond, sitting opposite, looked pale and anxious, and distressed. But ere a drop had touched his lips, a hand pressed his arm, and a soft voice said, "Don't."

Instantly the glass went down upon the table with so much force that the wine was spilled upon the cloth, while Julia muttered, under her breath, "Upon my word!" as she cast a lightning glance upon Gertie, whose face flushed, but whose blue eyes smiled approvingly upon poor Tom, and intoxicated him almost as much as the colonel's best wine could have done, only in a different way.

"You are a darling," Rosamond whispered to her, when at a late hour she and her brother were saying good-by to the

young people at the Hill. "Nobody but you could have kept Tom from drinking. I shall tell mother about it."

Tom, too, subdued, and ashamed that he had been so near falling again, and very grateful to his deliverer, whispered his words of thankfulness.

"You are my good angel, Gertie; but for you I should have been as drunk as a fool by this time. Heaven bless you as you deserve!"

Then the brother and sister went away, and the young ladies, tired and sleepy, started for their rooms, Alice looking around for Godfrey, with whom she would gladly have tarried a little longer to hear the soft nothings which she liked and had a right to expect from him. But Godfrey had disappeared, and only Gertie stood at the end of the broad piazza, leaning against a pillar, with the moonlight falling full upon her as she looked off upon the river and the mountains beyond, wondering at the strange unrest which filled her soul, and at the coldness of Godfrey toward her. As yet he had not addressed her a word since he came home, neither had she spoken to him. To be sure there had been a reason for this, for since the moment of his arrival, when he held her hand in his and looked so curiously at her, he had been occupied with some one else. His seat at dinner had been far away from hers. After dinner she had sat an hour or so with little Arthur, whom she always put to sleep, and on her return to the drawing-room she had at once been claimed by Tom Barton, who kept constantly at her side until he bade her good-night. So Godfrey was not so much to blame, and she acquitted him of intentional neglect, but felt a little hurt and grieved, and was saying to herself, "He does not care for me now," when a voice said, close to her ear, "Gertie!"

It was Godfrey's, and he was there beside her, looking into her face, on which the moonlight shone so brightly. He had eluded Alice, and when he heard her voice in her own room he stole out upon the piazza, intending to walk up and down a while before retiring to rest. First, however, he made the circuit of the building and glanced up at the room in

the south wing, which he had heard from Edith was Gertie's. But the windows were dark ; Gertie was not there ; or, being there, must have retired, and he retraced his steps to the piazza in front, where he saw the little, white-robed figure leaning over the railing. That was Gertie, and he went swiftly to her side, and spoke the one word, "Gertie," which brought the color to her cheeks, while the sparkle of the blue eyes, lifted so quickly, kindled a strange fire in his veins, and made him shiver as if he were cold.

"What, Godfrey?" Gertie answered softly, her eyes confronting him steadily a moment, and then dropping beneath his ardent gaze.

"Gertie, do you know you have not spoken to me since I came home? And I thought you would be so glad to see me."

There was reproach in his tone, and it went to Gertie's heart, and her voice trembled as she replied :

"I am glad to see you, Godfrey, gladder than you can guess. I thought so much of your coming, and then when you came home you never spoke to me."

There certainly was a tear on the long eyelashes, and tears on Gertie's eyelashes were very different things from tears on Alice's nose, and the impulsive Godfrey snatched up the hand which rested on the railing and held it fast in his own, as he said :

"Do you know why I did not speak to you? I could not, I was so completely confounded and bewildered to find you what you are. Tom Barton,—by the way, Gertie, you certainly have no intention of marrying Tom Barton, if he reforms a hundred times?"

"No, Godfrey, I have not."

"I thought so. Well, Tom raved about you by the hour, and said you were beautiful ; but that does not express it. I wonder now if you know just how you look."

She did not answer him, and he went on :

"It is more than four years since I saw you, and I had you in my mind as the little girl I used to tease at the cottage, and

who used to criticise me so severely. *Petite* you are still, it is true, but so changed in everything else, so completely a woman, that for a few moments I think I must have been sorry, feeling as I did that I had lost my little mentor in more ways than one."

He was looking fixedly at her, with strange, wild words trembling on his lips, but there was a bar between him and the bright beauty which so dazzled and fascinated him,—a thought of Alice, the light from whose window was shining down upon the shrubbery, and whose voice, as she leaned from the casement, was heard saying to some one: "Yes, she really is very pretty, but has no *style* whatever."

"Style be——" Godfrey did not say what, for a look in the blue eyes checked him; but he deepened his grasp on the hand he held, and his breath came hard as he said: "Gertie, you have not yet congratulated me upon my prospects. Do you not think I have chosen well?"

To Gertie it did not seem as if he had chosen well. He had nothing in common with Alice Creighton, but she did not tell him so, and she was wondering how she should answer him, when again the voice above them rang out, clear and loud:

"I have no fear of that. Her pretty face may attract Godfrey, and lead him to say soft nothings to her on the sly. All men do that, but I fancy I have influence enough to keep him from going far astray."

"Oh, Godfrey, I must not stay here any longer. It is too much like listening. Let me go, please!" Gertie said, trying to release her hand.

But Godfrey held her fast, saying to her:

"It is not listening. If Alice does not wish us to hear, let her talk in her room, and not out of the window. I cannot let you go yet. I want you all to myself for a little while. I may not get another chance."

He smiled bitterly, and then laying his disengaged hand on Gertie's shoulder he suddenly asked:

"Why did you not answer my letters, Gertie?"

"Your letters, Godfrey! What letters? I never received a line from you," Gertie said, while Godfrey rejoined:

"Never received a line from me! That is very strange!—and I wrote to you three different times. Thank, Gertie,—try to recall it. Four years ago, when you first went to school, and I came home and found you gone, I wrote from here how disappointed I was not to see you, and asked you to correspond with me, and let me be your brother. You were my little sister, I said; I adopted you as such, and I said a heap more *soft nothings*, as Alice might call them, though I was very much in earnest at the time, and to myself called you '*La Sœur*' always. And you never received that letter?"

"Never, Godfrey. I should remember that, and you say you wrote again?"

"Yes, from Andover; and sent my photograph, and asked for yours in return, and bet fifty dollars with some students that I'd show them the handsomest picture they ever saw, and I waited so anxiously for it; but it never came, and at last I wrote again, and told you to go to thunder! I did, upon my word, I felt so piqued and slighted, and I said I meant to go to the bad, and smoke, and drink, and swear, and do everything I could think of."

"Oh, Godfrey, Godfrey! You didn't, though, I hope!" Gertie cried, while her fingers tightened around the hand holding them so fast.

"Yes, I did,—for a little while. I drank a lot of wine, which went to my head, and smoked three cigars, which went to my stomach, and made me feel worse than sea-sickness, if that were possible. I was crazy as a loon, and smashed everything in my room, and sang uproarious songs; and, when one of the tutors came to see what was up, I called him a fool, and threw the wash-bowl at his head. Of course I was reprimanded, and reported to father, who came to see about it, and paid for the furniture, and talked so good that I promised to do better, and I did. And you say you never received those letters?"

"Never, Godfrey. I should have answered them," Gertie said, while Godfrey continued: "And if you had, Gertie,—I might,—oh, who knows what might have been!"

He was holding both her hands and looking down upon her

as no man ought to look upon a girl when he is engaged to another. Some such thought as this must have crossed Gertie's mind, for she released herself from him suddenly, and said :

"It is very late, Godfrey. I must go in now."

"No, Gertie, please," and he still tried to detain her. "Wait a little longer. I am yours to-night ; to-morrow I am some one's else, and must come under orders, you know."

He spoke ironically, and then as he saw that Gertie was really leaving him, he continued :

"By the way, Gertie, one thing more, and you may go. Do you remember the forlorn sick little girl who sat on the deck years ago, and the bold, impudent fellow who made her so angry, and the promise she gave him on certain conditions ?"

Gertie's cheeks were scarlet, as she replied : "Yes, Godfrey, I remember it."

"Well, then, can you redeem the promise now ?"

There was the old saucy look in his eyes, mingled with another look, which Gertie could not mistake, and stepping backward as he bent toward her, she answered him : "No, you are *not* a gentleman, or you would not remind me of that *now* !"

She was gone, and he heard her step as she went up the stairs and through the hall of the south wing to her own room, and he was alone in the quiet night, wondering what spell was upon him, and if it really were himself standing there, so bewildered and perplexed.

"I'll walk down the avenue and back as fast as I can, and see if that brings me to myself," he said, and he tried it, and went to the little cottage, where Gertie used to live, and stood leaning over the fence, and recalling the time when he first saw her there working in the garden with the flush on her cheeks, and her bright hair floating back from her face.

And then he remembered her as he had just seen her, grown to glorious womanhood, with eyes whose glances intoxicated him as he had never been intoxicated since the memorable college spree. Then he walked back again to the house on the

Hill, every window of which was darkened, and whose inmates were asleep. But for himself, he felt that he should never sleep again with those two conflicting sensations battling so fiercely in his heart, one cutting like a sharp, keen knife, when he remembered Alice and the words spoken to her less than a week ago, and the other thrilling him with ecstasy and a sense of delicious joy when he thought of the sweet, serene face on which the moonlight had fallen, softening and subduing, and making it like the face of an angel.

Godfrey was in love! He knew it at last, and exclaimed:

"I am in love with Gertie Westbrooke, and believe I have been ever since I first saw her years ago in London. But the knowledge of it has come too late. No Schuyler ever yet broke his word, and I shall not break mine. But if she had received my letters it might have been so different."

And why had she not received them? How could three letters go astray? Certainly he directed them aright. He surely did the one sent to Schuyler Hill. He had written to his father at the same time and received an answer to that. Why, then, did Gertie not get hers? Had there been foul play, and if so, where and by whom? Suddenly there flashed into his mind a suspicion which made him start, while a strange gleam shone in his eyes, as he said:

"I'll know the truth to-morrow."

It was to-morrow now, for the early summer morning was shining on the mountain tops, and tired and excited, Godfrey went at last to his room to get a little rest before the household was astir.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

COLONEL SCHUYLER INTERVIEWS GODFREY.



GODFREY, I wish to see you for a few moments," the colonel said to his son when towards noon he found him in the library alone.

"Certainly, I wish to see you, too," Godfrey replied, as he arose and followed his father to the little office in the rear of the house, where the colonel transacted his business.

Colonel Schuyler did not know exactly what he wished to say to his son, and after they were seated there ensued a moment's silence, which Godfrey broke by saying :

"What is it, father? What do you want with me?"

"Oh, yes, sure. I—I—wish to speak of this affair,—your engagement, you know, and arrange about the marriage, and when it will take place. The sooner the better, I think, as I do not believe in long engagements."

"But, father, I have not my profession yet," Godfrey said, feeling again the cutting pain as he thought of being really tied to Alice, with no longer a right to think of that sweet face which had looked at him through the moonlight and made his heart throb so fast.

"Yes, I know ; but you can finish your studies after marriage," the colonel replied ; and seeing Godfrey about to speak again, he continued : "I need not tell you how glad I am of this engagement, which I have hoped for so long. Alice is a fine girl, —a very fine girl ; not as handsome, perhaps, as some," he said, as he guessed what was in Godfrey's mind, and thought, himself, of a rare type of beauty, which moved even him at times.

"No, Miss Creighton is not a beauty,—I should think not," Godfrey interrupted, impatiently, whereupon the colonel brought his eyebrows together, and regarding his son curiously, went on :

"Such girls as Alice, I have often noticed, grow into fine looking old ladies ; so they have the advantage in one respect.

"Yes ; but who cares or thinks of a good-looking *old* wife ! Godfrey said, petulantly.

But his father did not seem to notice his petulance, and continued :

"Your Uncle Calvert writes me that you looked at a house which Alice would like. Did it suit you as well ?"

"Yes ; I found no fault with it except its size. It will cost one fortune to furnish it, and another to run it according to Alice's ideas," Godfrey answered, crisply, seeing, even then, as in a vision, a lovely little cottage somewhere among the hills in the quiet country, with just room enough in it for himself and *one more*, and that one, alas ! *not* Alice.

"Thirty thousand a year ought to run most any house ; and that, I believe, is Miss Creighton's income," was the colonel's remark, to which there was no reply ; and he continued : "I think we may as well secure this house at once. I will write to your Uncle Calvert to-day ; and, Godfrey, it will suit me to have the marriage consummated soon,—say some time in the autumn. Shall I call Alice, and see if she is willing ?"

He arose to touch the bell, when Godfrey interposed, and grasping his father's arm, said quickly :

"Father, listen to me ! My engagement was a hasty thing, brought about Heaven only knows how, and now I will not commit a second blunder by allowing myself to be driven into a hasty marriage."

"Godfrey, my son !"—and now the colonel roused a little,—
"one would think your heart was not in this marriage, which I desire so much !"

There was no answer from Godfrey, and the colonel went on :

"I trust you knew your own mind when you offered yourself to Alice, and that you have no thought of drawing back. Remember, that for many generations a Schuyler has never broken his word ; they have all been men of honor, and my son must not be the first to disgrace us."

Godfrey was white now, even to his lips, and his voice shook as he replied :

"You need not fear for me, I shall keep my word to Alice. The Schuylers will not be disgraced by me. And now, father, one question to you. The Schuylers, you say, were all men of honor, and I put it to your honor to answer me truly. Four years ago last spring, when I came home from Andover and found Gertie Westbrooke gone, I was terribly disappointed. That child,—she was one then,—had a powerful hold on me, and by her purity of principle and plain way of speaking to me was doing me untold good, and I wanted to see her again and hear what she had to say. But she was gone, and so I wrote to her, and gave the letter to *you* to post just as I would have given you one for Bob. It may seem strange that I remember it so distinctly. But I do. You were going out with letters in your hand and I gave you that, but never heard from it afterward. After waiting awhile for an answer I wrote again from school with a like result, and then when I knew she was here I wrote again, and directed to your care. Do you know why neither of these letters ever reached her, for they did not? She told me so last night when I asked her why she did not reply."

He was looking steadily at his father, whose eyes were cast down as he replied :

"My son, I have to beg your pardon there. It was not an honorable thing to do, though I did it for the best. I never sent the letter committed to my care, and I wrote to Miss —, the preceptress, sending her a specimen of your writing, and asking her if any letter came to Gertie Westbrooke, directed in that hand, to withhold it from her and mail it back to me. She did so, and when your third and last arrived I kept it also, and have them now unopened and unread."

"And truly that was a very honorable thing for one to do who talks to *me* of honor! May I ask why you did it?" Godfrey said, his young face flushing and his voice full of anger.

"I did it to prevent possible trouble. I knew how much you were interested in the girl, and I did not wish to have her harmed."

"Father!" and Godfrey's voice rang with surprise and scorn. "You knew me. I am your son, and you knew that sooner than

dishonor any woman I would part with my life ; much less then would I harm a hair of the head of one who has been to me the sweetest thing I ever knew since I first saw her years ago in England. You had nothing to fear for her. There was some other reason. Will you tell me what it was, honestly ?—the Schuylers are men of honor, you know ! ”

To this appeal the colonel answered a little hotly :

“ Yes, Godfrey, I will tell you the truth. I feared an entanglement which might interfere with the wish of my life. I knew how beautiful, and sweet, and pure Gertie was just as well as you. But she is not a fitting wife for you. She has neither money, name, nor friends.”

“ How do you know that ? Mary Rogers always said she was a lady born,” Godfrey exclaimed impetuously, and his father replied :

“ When Mary died and the child came here to live, I took pains to inquire into her antecedents, and wrote to the firm where her annuity is invested. But they could tell me nothing ; the business had been done by Mrs. Rogers as guardian of the child, and I came to regard the big house and the high-born mother as a myth. No, Gertie has no friends, no money, no name, and I would not see you throw yourself away as you might have done had the correspondence been permitted to go on. Believe me, Godfrey, I acted for the best. It was your mother’s dying wish that you should marry Alice, and for her sake, if for no other, you will not break your word.”

“ I have no intention of breaking my word. I am engaged to Alice, and shall marry her in time, but if it were to do again, I should think twice before I made a promise I find so hard to keep ; for, father, we will have no more concealments. I love Gertie Westbrooke so much that I would rather live with her on a crust a day than share with another all the splendors of the world. It is no sudden passion either. She has been in my heart constantly, though absence and silence had dimmed the picture a little, and I thought of her always as a child. But when I saw her yesterday in the full bloom of womanhood, and compared her with Alice and my sisters and all the girls I ever

now, I knew that for me there was no other woman living, no other love which could ever touch my heart and make it throb just as it does now at the mere mention of her. I love her better than my life, and love her all the more for knowing she is not for me. I have promised to marry Alice and shall keep my word, unless she releases me of her own free will. But I will not be hurried into matrimony. I will have my profession first and keep my freedom a little longer. You need not bargain for that house ; I shall not need it. I presume our conference is ended, and if you will excuse me I'll go where I can breathe ; the atmosphere of this room is stifling."

He arose precipitately, and, with a bow to his father, rushed into the open air, and going to the stables bade John saddle Bedouin, his favorite mare and pet.

"Surely, Mr. Godfrey, you will not ride in this dreadful heat. It will kill the mare. She has not been much used to exercise lately," John said, for he knew his young master's partiality for fast and long riding, and dreaded the effect on Bedouin, a beautiful young chestnut mare with graceful, flowing mane.

But Godfrey was not in a mood to consider either horse-flesh or heat. He must do something to work off that load weighing so heavily upon his heart, and mounting Bedouin and giving her full rein, he went tearing down the avenue at headlong speed and off into the country, mile after mile, while the people in the farm-houses looked curiously after him, wondering if it were a case of life or death, or if he were some felon escaping from justice. On and on he went, knowing nothing of the flecks of white foam gathering all over Bedouin's body, and knowing nothing how fast or how far he was riding, or that he had turned and was going toward home, until, on a sudden, the poor beast began to reel, and with a few plunges came heavily to the ground just before the door of Mrs. Vandeusenhsen. In a trice the good woman was at his side, followed by the twins whose interest in the struggling steed was greater than in the young man picking himself up and rubbing his bruised knee.

"Poor Bedouin. I'm afraid it's all over with you," Godfrey said as he knelt by the dying brute, whom he tenderly caressed,

and who seemed to understand him. "Poor Bedouin, poor pet, I did not mean to kill you. I am so sorry. Poor little lady," he kept repeating, as he held the horse's head on his arm and gazed into the dying eyes, where there was almost a human look of love and pardon as the noble beast expired.

"He's a goner, sure," came from one of the twins, as the horse ceased to breathe and Godfrey bent to undo the fastenings of the saddle.

"What is it? Is any one hurt? Oh, Godfrey, is that you? What is the matter?" was spoken in a voice which made Godfrey start, and turning round he saw Gertie in the door.

She had been sitting with old Mrs. Vandeusenhisen, who was sick, and hearing the noise outside had come to see what was the matter.

"Are you hurt? What is it? Oh, Godfrey, Bedouin is dead! What *have* you been doing?" she asked, with tears in her eyes and reproach in her voice.

"Been exorcising the demon within me, and believe I've succeeded in casting it out, but at the cost of Beddy's life. Poor Beddy! I hope she's gone where she'll have nothing to do but eat clover and kick up her heels the blessed day," Godfrey answered playfully, trying to make light of it, though in truth his heart was very heavy as he removed the saddle and bridle, and calling to some men working on the road at a little distance, made arrangements with them for burying his horse.

Then turning to Gertie he said:

"I am at your service now, if you are ready to go home. It must be near dinner-time."

And so the two walked slowly down the street and up the long avenue towards the group of girls, who, in their airy evening dresses, stood watching them as they came.

"Where have you been this scorching afternoon?" Alice asked, with a cloud upon her face.

"I have been to read to old Mrs. Vandeusenhisen. I go there almost every day," Gertie replied, as she went quietly into the house and up to her room to dress for dinner.

"And you have been reading to old Mrs. Van, too?" Alice

asked of Godfrey, who replied by telling her what had happened to Bedouin.

"The weather was too hot and I rode too fast," he said. 'John warned me of the danger, but I did not listen, and now Bedouin is dead and I am two hundred dollars out of pocket, with a reputation for fastness and cruelty, no doubt, which would bring Bergh about my ears, if he were only here in Hampstead."

"But are you hurt, Godfrey? Oh, I'm afraid you are. Look, your pants are all dirt," Alice cried, clinging to him with a pretty affectation of concern, which, if the "demon had not been exorcised," would have disgusted and made him angry, but which in his present mood he was inclined to humor and laugh at.

He had made up his mind to make the best of his situation and bear the burden bravely. Alice was his betrothed, and had a right to cling to him and be anxious if she chose, and he let her do it, and even wound his arm around her as he assured her of his perfect safety.

"Now, then, you must let me go and dress for dinner," he said, as the first bell rang out its summons, and breaking away from her he ran up to his room, where he bathed his face and hands and said to himself, as he looked in the glass and saw how pale he was :

"It's a hard thing, old fellow, but you will have to pull through. No Schuyler ever yet broke his word."

He was very attentive to Alice that night, while in her delight at his attentions she forgave Gertie for walking with him from Mrs. Vandeusenhisers's, though the germ of jealousy was planted in her mind, and she resolved to keep a close watch of the girl, who, with blanched cheeks and throbbing pulse, was, at that very hour, listening to what very nearly concerned the little heiress of thirty thousand a year.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

COL. SCHUYLER INTERVIEWS GERTIE.

COL. SCHUYLER was not quite satisfied with his interview with Godfrey, or his promise to keep his word and marry Alice Creighton. No doubt he meant to do it, but Godfrey was impulsive and hot-headed, and loved another with a depth and fervency which astonished the cold-blooded man. All day he had been haunted with the flushed, excited face, and the thrilling voice which had said so passionately, "I love Gertie Westbrooke so much that I would rather live with her on a crust a day than share with another the splendors of the world."

Perhaps during the long summer days, when they would be thrown together, he would forget his word of honor, and tell her of his love, and what then? She would listen, of course, unless some powerful obstacle were interposed to keep her from it, and that obstacle the colonel would interpose in the shape of Gertie's own promise and sense of honor. He could trust her better than his son, and he meant to put her to the test, even if by doing it he wrung her heart cruelly, and awoke within her a sleeping passion, of whose existence she possibly did not know. And yet the colonel had no antipathy to Gertie; on the contrary, he liked her very much, and thought hers the most beautiful face he had ever seen, if he excepted Edith's, which it in some respects resembled, and had Gertie's forty pounds a year been forty thousand, or even half that amount, he would have given the preference to her, notwithstanding she had no family, or friends, or name. But the colonel held money high, and prized the luxuries which money brings, and did not wish to live without them. And money was not quite as plentiful with Col. Schuyler as it once had been. He had met with some heavy losses recently, and now that little Arthur had come, and other children might yet call him father, Godfrey's fortune would be much less than he had hoped to make it, and so Godfrey

must marry rich, and his love be put aside, and Gertie must help to do it, and be the means, if need be, of breaking her own and Godfrey's heart.

"Gertie," he said to her, very pleasantly and affably, when just before dark he found her watering a bed of geraniums near the south wing windows; "Gertie, can I see you alone a few moments? I have something to say to you."

"Certainly," she answered, and putting down her watering pot, and taking off her garden gloves and hat, she followed him to the same room where, earlier in the day, Godfrey had declared his love for her, and where now she was to promise to reject that love should it ever be offered to her, for that was the colonel's intention. He knew Gertie well enough to know that her word once passed she would keep it, though her heart broke in the keeping. But how should he commence? What should he say to the young girl whose blue eyes were confronting him so steadily?

"Gertie," he began at last, "I brought you here to ask a favor of you; a great favor, which I hope you will grant."

"Yes, Col. Schuyler, anything I can do for you, I will," she said, and he went on:

"I have been kind to you, Gertie, have I not, ever since you first came to live with us?"

"Yes, very, very kind," Gertie answered, wondering at the question, and his reason for reminding her of the kindness.

"I have tried to do you good," he said, speaking with a little hesitancy now; "first for Mrs. Schuyler's sake, and lastly because I liked you myself, and was greatly interested in you, and felt that you were no ordinary girl. I tell you this to let you know that the favor I have to ask has nothing to do with you personally. I am your friend, and will be so as long as I live, and provide for you at my death, or sooner if you marry, as you probably will,—girls like you always do, and I,—yes I——"

What was he going to say to her, Gertie wondered, a thought of Tom Barton crossing her mind? Was Col. Schuyler about to advocate his cause? Impossible, she said to herself, and waited impatiently for him to proceed. But she was not at all

prepared for the abrupt question with which he finally plunged into the business.

"Gertie, has my son ever made love to you? That is, has he ever said or done anything which under some circumstances might give you reason to think him more interested in you than in another?"

There was a violent start, and Gertie's face was crimson as she looked across the table at the man questioning her thus, while her thoughts leaped backward to the previous night and the eyes which had looked so tenderly upon her, the hands which had held hers so fast, and the voice so full of passion telling her of the lost letters and saying to her so sadly :

"If you had received them, Gertie,—if you had, I might, oh, who knows what might have been?"

All day long the remembrance of that interview had been in her mind, filling her with a delicious feeling of happiness that Godfrey did care for her, and bringing occasionally a pang of regret as she wondered what would have been had she received his letters. She had never dreamed of marriage in connection with Godfrey. She had always supposed that he belonged to Alice, and so she did not know the real nature of the emotions Godfrey's language the previous night had called into being until Col. Schuyler tore the veil away and laid her heart before her, bare and palpitating with love for Godfrey, his son. What right had he to question her thus, and how could she answer him, she asked herself, as, with her hands locked together, and the love whose existence she had just discovered swelling and surging in her heart, now with throbs of anguish as she remembered Alice, and now with beats of joy as she thought of Godfrey, she sat motionless and silent, until the colonel spoke again :

"You do not answer me, and from that I infer he has made love to you. Was it last night? He told me he talked with you. Gertie, this must not be. Godfrey is bound to Alice. It was settled years ago in our families. It was his mother's dying wish. It is the one thing I desire above all others. I have nothing against you, Gertie,—nothing; but Godfrey must

marry Alice, and you must not let him break his word to her."

He spoke rapidly, glancing only once at the face opposite, which was white as ashes, and he could see the slight figure sway a little from side to side, while a sound like a smothered sob broke on his ear, and then Gertie spoke, very low and very decidedly, but with no anger in her voice.

"Col. Schuyler, you need not fear for Godfrey. He never made love to me, though I think,—I believe it would be easy for me to tempt him to do so, but I shall not try. I will not be the serpent in your Eden, or sting the hand which has fed me. You have been too kind to me for that. I shall not prove ungrateful."

"God bless you, Gertie. I was sure you would do right. It is more necessary to me than you know that Godfrey should marry Alice, and you have lifted a great burden from my heart. Godfrey is impulsive and hot-headed, and easily influenced, and seeing you every day might be won from his allegiance, especially as I do not think his whole heart is in this marriage; but it must be, and, Gertie, if he should come to you with words of love, promise me you will refuse to listen. I shall feel secure then. I can trust you, I know. Will you promise, Gertie?"

He held his hand toward the little, cold, white fingers resting on the table, and which crept slowly on till they lay in his grasp, while Gertie said:

"I promise, Colonel Schuyler; but,—but,—Godfrey,—I did not know before that I loved him so much until now that I am giving him up forever."

Oh, what a piteous voice it was, and how the slight frame shook with suppressed sobs and tears while the colonel sat watching and wishing so much to comfort her. But he could not, and he let her cry on for a few moments, when he said:

"Gertie, your distress pains me greatly, but you are young and will outlive this fancy; and, Gertie, it has occurred to me that you may wish to go away for the summer while the young people are here, but I would rather you should stay. Mrs

Schuyler would be very unhappy without you, while Godfrey, I think, would be discontented and follow you, perhaps. It is better, on the whole, to stay : and Gertie, I need not ask that this interview shall be a secret between us. Not even my wife must know of it."

Gertie hesitated a moment, and then replied :

"Colonel Schuyler, if a time ever comes when Godfrey speaks to me of love I shall refuse him, as I promised, but I shall tell him why. I must do that, you know !"

And with this Colonel Schuyler was obliged to be content. He had gained his point, and looked upon his son's marriage with Alice as a sure thing, and he felt very kind and tender toward the young girl whose heart he had wrung so cruelly, and whose sad face smote him as he bade her good-night and blessed her for what she had promised.

The next morning Gertie was suffering from a severe headache and did not appear at breakfast or lunch, but she was better in the afternoon and was able to walk to Edith's boudoir, where she lay upon the couch and had her dinner brought to her. As she was about to eat it a voice said at the door : "May I come in ?" and, without waiting for an answer, Godfrey entered the room. He had heard from Edith that she was there, and declining the dessert, had excused himself from the table and gone directly to her.

"See, I have brought you a pond lily and a bunch of blue violets, because I remembered how much you used to like them. The violets are just the color of your eyes," he said, as he held them so close to her that his hand touched her white cheek and sent the hot blood to it suddenly.

Then, drawing his chair close to her couch, he began to talk as easily and naturally as if the sight of her, so pale and languid and sweet, were not stirring within him a wild tornado of feeling which, had he known of the answering throb in her heart, might have burst its bonds and trampled down every right of the little lady coming down the hall ostensibly to call on Gertie, but really to know for herself if Godfrey was there with her !

"And so you are taking your dessert here ? Really, Miss

Westbrooke, I shall object to this," Alice said, as she entered the room, trying to speak playfully, though there was that in her eyes which warned Godfrey not to provoke her too far if he would avoid a scene. Spying the lily she snatched it up, exclaiming: "The very thing I was wanting for my hair! Where did it come from?"

Gertie glanced at Godfrey, who explained:

"It was the only one the boy had, or I would have bought more."

"Oh, you brought it to her, then?" Alice said, dropping it as suddenly as if it had been plague-smitten, while Gertie said, entreatingly:

"Please keep it, Miss Creighton, I really do not care for it."

"Neither do I, thank you;" and with a very low bow Alice left the room, waiting at the end of the hall till Godfrey saw fit to join her.

There was something of a quarrel between the two lovers, who walked down the garden to a retired summer-house, where, Godfrey said, they could have it out, bidding Alice "scratch and bite like a little cat, if she wanted to."

"I don't want to scratch nor bite, and I ain't a little cat, but I do not think it fair in you to admire that girl so much, and take her lilies and violets and things, and you engaged to me," Alice sobbed, while Godfrey, who knew that she really had just cause for complaint, tried to appease her, and promised not to offend again so far as Gertie was concerned.

"Though I do like her," he said, "and always shall; but I intend to be loyal to you, Allie, and mean to make you happy, and I want you to remember that, and not flare up every time I happen to look at a girl."

And Alice promised that she would not, and took his proffered kiss of reconciliation very graciously, and when, in the early dusk of the warm summer night, I walked up to the Hill to call on the young ladies, I found the engaged pair sitting by themselves at the far end of the piazza, Alice with her hand clasping Godfrey's arm, while she told him something to which he seem

ed to listen in a preoccupied kind of way, as if he hardly knew what she was saying to him.

CHAPTER XL.

ROBERT MACPHERSON INTERVIEWS GERTIE.

GERTIE was quite well the next day, and took her usual place at the table, and when breakfast was over and Godfrey and the young ladies had gone to ride, she strolled out to the little cemetery, which looked so cool and inviting with the white marble gleaming through the evergreens and climbing vines. Scarcely was she seated there when she heard footsteps near, and saw Robert Macpherson coming rapidly toward her.

"Excuse me," he said, "I have followed you here because I wanted to be alone while I gave you something, and told you something which should have been told and given before, only,—" he paused a moment, looking both embarrassed and distressed, and then continued hastily: "I am a coward and a fool! Gertie, were you ever ashamed to tell who you were?"

"What do you mean?" Gertie asked, looking curiously at him.

"I mean that my blood is a little mixed," he answered, "but I will explain that by and by, and now to my business. I think you have several times pressed flowers which grew on this grave" (pointing to Abelard's), "and sent them to his mother."

"Yes. I have pressed them for Mrs. Schuyler to send two or three times when she had not the leisure, and have written for her to the sweet-faced old lady of whom she once told me," Gertie said, and Robert rejoined: "I saw that old lady when I was abroad the last time, and when she heard I was coming here she told me of Mrs. Schuyler, whom she had seen, and of the 'bonnie young lassie' who took such care of her boy's grave, and sent her flowers from it, and she wrote you a letter, Gertie, because she said you seemed very near to her, and she

sent you some 'Cairngorms' for a necklace and earrings. They have been in the family for years, and she intended them for her oldest grand-daughter, but she died, and there is no other, so she sent them to you, knowing that Mrs. Schuyler can have far more precious stones, though I think these very handsome; they are almost as fine as a topaz,—look," and he handed her a box in which were several very fine Cairngorms of that variety found in Aberdeenshire.

"Oh, how pretty, how beautiful!" Gertie exclaimed, holding them to the light. "And she sent them to me? I do not understand it."

"Read her letter and you will see how much she is interested in you," Robert said, handing Gertie a large, unsealed letter, directed in a very peculiar hand, and which I will give in part, avoiding as much as possible the broad Scotch which made it so unintelligible that Robert was obliged himself to read it to Gertie before she clearly understood it.

"My bonnie lassie," it began, "an old crone from over the sea sends you her blessing and prayers for the care you've taken of my puir laddie's grave, and the posys you've sent, and the letters you've writ with the same, and which fetches you very near to my heart and love, and so I send you these stones from Can-Gorrum, to wear round your bonny neck, and in yer pretty ears. My grandson, Robert, will tell you how his puir mother had them, and gie them to me when I was cauld, and hungry, and sair; but I dinna sell them for the siller, as she thinket I moight. I weatherit the storm, Jinnie and me, and kep 'em for her ain sweet bairn, Dolly, who died; and it's not the loikes of Jinnie to wear sic as these, and her lassies bein' all lads, I sends them to you with my blessin', and duty to the beautiful Ladye Skiller, and so I greet you; God bless you, good-by.

"MISTRESS DORATHY LYLE,

"by her grandson Robert."

Gertie had listened intently until the point was reached where reference was made to my "grandson Robert," when she started up, exclaiming :

"What?"

"Wait," Robert said; "wait till I am through," and, with a shaking voice, he finished the letter, laying a good deal of emphasis upon the last words, "by my grandson Robert."

"Her grandson! What does she mean, Mr. Macpherson? Does she mean *you*?" Gertie asked, and Robert replied:

"Yes, Gertie, she means *me*. I am that woman's grandchild, the son of her daughter, and I am going to tell you about it."

He spoke rapidly, and Gertie had no chance to interrupt him as he went on.

"My mother was Dorothea Lyle, born in Alnwick, in the same thatched cottage Mrs. Schuyler has undoubtedly described to you. She was the eldest child and beautiful,—the Lyles are all good-looking, and mother was pre-eminently so, with a tolerable education, too, acquired from a lady in the neighborhood who was interested in her, and in whose house she was a nursery governess. It was there she met my father, the youngest son of an old Scotch family, which had a title in reversion and a good deal of money. It was a runaway match, which the proud Macphersons tried to overthrow. But they could not, and if they had, my father would have married his beautiful Dolly again. He was very fond of her, and taught her a great deal himself, so that my first recollections of her are of as fine a lady in speech and manner as any I have ever seen. I was born in Naples, where father tried to earn his living by painting, for he was a natural artist and we were very poor, as his family turned him off and would not receive him with his wife.

"It was about this time that Mrs. Lyle wrote to mother of sickness and destitution, and asked for money in her need, but alas, we had none, and mother sent these Cairngorms, which father bought for her when she was married, and which they had never been able to have set for herself. She thought her mother could sell them for bread, but she would not. Her fortunes brightened a little just then, and she kept the stones carefully, meaning them for my sister on her bridal day; but that day never came. I told you of my sister once, and that you looked

like her. She was so beautiful, and I loved her so much, but she died when she was twelve years old, and the only picture we had of her was burned. Our fortunes were mending then. The Macpherson mother was dead, and the father sent us money, and when mother died, two years after Dora, father and I were invited to Glenthorpe, in the north of Scotland, and there father died, and by my grandfather's will I came into possession, at his death, of a large sum of money, and now, by another death, I have a right, if I choose, to take my wife to Glenthorpe, should I ever have one, which I probably never shall, for the girl I love is too proud to marry *me*, knowing who I am."

Gertie thought of Julia Schuyler, but she did not speak, and after a moment Robert continued :

"You wonder, perhaps, why I never told this before, and I blush to own that I was ashamed to do it and acknowledge that I was anything to this man by whose grave I stand, or anything to that family whom Mr. and Mrs. Schuyler and Godfrey have seen. I think people who have been very poor, and have come up from the great unwashed, have that feeling more than those to the manor born, and though I have tried to be kind to my mother's friends so far as gifts are concerned, I have shrunk from coming in contact with them, especially the Aunt Nesbit, of whom it is no slander to say she is very *coarse*.

"I went first to see them years ago, just before coming to America, and when I heard of their acquaintance with the Schuylers I hesitated about crossing the sea with Godfrey, but was finally persuaded and came to Hampstead where I have felt like a criminal every time allusion has been made to Abelard Lyle. Last March I went again to see them, and, coward that I am, did not tell them I had been here, only that I was coming, and then Mrs. Lyle, my grandmother, spoke of you, and asked me to bring the letter and the Cairngorms. I could not refuse, and knew then I must tell you everything, and I have, except, indeed, of my father's family, which ranks among the first in Scotland. Glenthorpe is a beautiful place and will be my home in future, for I am the only male heir left to that estate.

"I have told you my story, Gertie, and will not ask you to keep my secret. The sooner it is divulged the better, perhaps, as I shall then know the worst there is to know, with regard to the girl I love. She will never marry a carpenter's nephew; her father would not permit it either."

He seemed to be waiting for a reply, and Gertie said at last:

"Col. Schuyler is very proud, and she is prouder than he, I think; but Glenthorpe may reconcile her to a great deal. You must tell her yourself, however. I shall not help you there."

"But, Gertie, do you think she cares for me? You girls can judge of each other better than men can judge of you. Does she like me ever so little, think you?"

Remembering how, from the first, Julia had appropriated Robert to herself, seeming jealous and angry of his slightest attention to another, Gertie replied:

"If you should ask her to be your wife, and tell her nothing of the Lyles, I am sure she would say yes," and with that answer Robert was obliged to be content, but there was a shadow on his face, which lasted for a week or more, and which Julia's blandishments and coquetries had no power to remove. Indeed, he hardly seemed to notice them or her, and when Godfrey rallied him, and asked what was the matter, he answered that he was pining for Glenthorpe, and began to talk seriously of going back to Scotland; but to this Godfrey would not listen, and when Julia's eyes looked at him pleadingly as she said: "Don't go till fall, Mr. Macpherson;" while Emma, who seldom said much, expressed a strong desire for him to remain, he gave up Glenthorpe for the summer, and stayed at Schuyler Hill.

Meantime Gertie's present had been shown, and discussed, and admired by Edith, and Emma, and Godfrey, while Alice wondered if they were *real* Cairngorms, and Julia had said, in Robert's hearing, that she'd like to see *herself* wearing stones which came from such a source, and the colonel had offered to send them to New York and have them set handsomely. But this Gertie would not permit. She had a plan in her mind which she hoped some day to carry out, and test Miss Julia's unwillingness to "wear stones from such a source" as that white

haired woman over the sea, whom the proud beauty teasingly called "Gertie's godmother."

CHAPTER XLI.

A FEW DETAILS OF THAT SUMMER IN HAMPSTEAD.

THERE were many guests at the Bartons', and the Montgomeries', and the Morrisises, that summer, but nowhere was there so much hilarity and mirth as at Schuyler Hill, for there from time to time came dashing, brilliant people from New York and Philadelphia, and every room was full, and Godfrey took a small apartment in the attic, and made many jokes upon the high life he was enjoying. There were sails upon the river, and excursions to the mountains, and picnics in the woods, and dances on the piazza, and croquet parties on the lawn, and dinners, and suppers, and breakfasts, and lunches, and private theatricals in the great drawing-room; and toward the close of the summer there was a grand party at the Ridge House, to which the young people from the Hill were bidden, and Alice's toilet was wonderful in texture and style, while Julia was pronounced the most beautiful lady there, until Gertie came, in her simple muslin dress, and eclipsed them all. It was rather late when she entered the crowded rooms, and after greeting Mrs. Barton and Rosamond drifted away from the colonel, who had accompanied her, and found herself close to Godfrey before she was aware of his proximity. Since that promise to his father, she had studiously avoided him, and Alice had no just cause for jealousy so far as Gertie was concerned. Godfrey, too, had made up his mind to accept his fate, and kept aloof from Gertie as much as possible, though there was a world of kindness in his voice whenever he spoke to her, and he always knew when she came in and when she went out, and his eyes followed her with a longing, hungry look, which Alice would have resented, had she noticed it and

interpreted it aright. But she was not quick to see, and as Godfrey was very attentive to her, and called her his *little cat* and teased her unmercifully, and kissed her every morning, she was satisfied and happy, and on the night of the party stood, flushed and triumphant, at his side, while he fanned her heated face, telling her she must not dance again for an hour at least, no matter who asked her; it was too warm for such exercise, and he preferred the open air; he did not mean to dance himself if he could help it, and if Alice liked they'd go out upon the west balcony, where it was cooler.

There had been a cloud on Godfrey's face the entire evening, and his eyes were constantly wandering over the moving throng in quest of one they did not see.

"Where is Miss Westbrooke?" Tom Barton had asked him anxiously, but Godfrey could not tell him.

She was intending to come with his father, he said, and possibly had not yet arrived; and as the festivity was nothing to Tom without Gertie, he sauntered away to an open window, and when Rosamond asked him to dance with a young lady who was a guest at the Ridge House, and who had been a wall-flower all the evening, he answered, "Oh, bother! I can't; it's too hot. I'm melting now," and stepped through the window upon the balcony to be out of the way.

Neither he nor Godfrey cared to dance, though both had in their minds a graceful little figure which they would gladly have whirled about the room, and when at last she appeared and came upon Godfrey just as he had proposed going out upon the piazza with Alice, he forgot everything but his surprise and delight at seeing her, and exclaimed, joyfully:

"Oh, Gertie, I'm so glad you have come. I've been waiting for you to dance with me. Come, they are just forming a new set."

He held both his arms toward her, and Gertie, unmindful of everything and seeing nothing but the look in Godfrey's eyes and the arms held to her, went straight into them, thinking to herself, "For jist this once,—I may be happy with him."

And she was happy, and Godfrey, too,—and people looked

admiringly at the handsome pair, and strangers asked who the beautiful girl with the bright hair and simple dress was, and where she came from.

I was at the party that night, and stood very near to Alice, when Gertie came in and was snatched up so quickly by Godfrey. I had heard him announce his intention not to dance, and ask Alice to go with him where it was cooler, and Alice had taken a step toward the door when Gertie came and changed the entire aspect of affairs.

"Godfrey," I heard Alice say, as her lover moved away from her, but Godfrey was deaf and blind to everything but the girl on his arm, and Alice called in vain.

Godfrey had teased her for her red face, but it was pale enough now, and her small eyes had in them a greenish light as they followed Godfrey's tall form and caught occasional glimpses of Gertie's long, bright curls which came below her waist and were the wonder of the room. Alice was very indignant, and when the question was put to her, "Who is that beautiful girl dancing with Mr. Schuyler?" she stood on tiptoe, and pretending to be looking toward the dancers, answered with suppressed bitterness :

"Oh, that is Gertie Westbrooke, a girl who lives with Mrs. Schuyler, and sees a little to Arthur,—a kind of nursery governess, I believe."

"Ah, yes, thank you," and Mrs. Jamieson, from Philadelphia, put up her glass to look again at the girl "who lived with Mrs. Schuyler and was a kind of nursery governess."

Meanwhile Godfrey and Gertie were unmindful of everything but the fact that for a brief space they were together, hand touching hand in a clasp of love rather than form, and eye meeting eye with a sad, remorseful kind of pitying tenderness, as if each knew they were tasting forbidden fruit and for the last time, too. This, at least, was Godfrey's thought. Tomorrow it would all be over, and he would be Alice's again, but to-night he was Gertie's and she was his, and he abandoned himself to the delight until he seemed intoxicated with happiness. He had never danced with her since the memorable

church sociable years ago, when she was a little, airy, restless humming-bird, who had infused something of her own life and elasticity into his rather languid movements and made him try to be worthy of his partner. Gertie was very young then, and no thought of calling her his had entered Godfrey's heart, where now the sad refrain was repeating itself over and over again, "It might have been, It might have been."

There was another dance, and another, and then Godfrey led Gertie out upon the west balcony where he had proposed taking Alice, and where he now sat down with Gertie at his side, and looking into her eyes of blue forgot the eyes of gray which had followed his every movement, and in which were little gleams of fire when they saw him going out, and the care he took to wrap Gertie's cloak around her arms and shoulders. It certainly was not chance which led Alice that way; she went on purpose with a group of heated girls eager for a breath of air, and her garments swept against Gertie's as she went by, and the green eyes looked at Godfrey with a look he understood and did not resent, for he knew that he deserved it, but he was not penitent and he did not give Gertie up until his father, who had been talking politics in a distant room, and did not know of his son's misdemeanor, came to find her and take her out to supper. Then Godfrey went in quest of Alice, but she was already appropriated by a young Bostonian, who waxed his mustache and wore a quizzing glass on his nose, and her only answer was a little defiant snort when Godfrey said: "I see I am too late." So Godfrey took me out and was restless and excited and full of life and fun. But I saw that his spirits were forced, and that his eyes went often to the part of the room where Gertie stood, surrounded by a group of gentlemen who were ostensibly talking to Colonel Schuyler, but really admiring her as the most beautiful lady there. Alice was standing near us, and once Godfrey offered her some lobster salad with a comical look on his face, but Alice did not take it or respond to him in any way, and I knew there was a quarrel in store for him, and pitied him because he was answerable for his actions to that little pug-nosed lady whose only attraction, beside a

certain grace and piquancy of manner, was thirty thousand a year.

I do not think she spoke to him again that night, and I know she did not ride home with him, for I saw the four girls from the Hill stowed away with Colonel Schuyler, and heard Godfrey tell his father not to send the carriage back, as he and Robert preferred to walk. And so the party was over and one heart at least was sadder for it, and one was in a wild tumult of joy and regret as it recalled glances and tones which meant so much and which had come too late to be of any avail.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE SAIL ON THE RIVER.

THE morning succeeding the party was hot and sultry, and two, at least, of the young ladies at Schuyler Hill were cross, and tired, and worn when they joined the family at breakfast. Alice had slept but little, and her temper was still at the boiling point when she went down to the table, where she scarcely spoke at all, while Julia, who had a headache, was not much better. Both were fagged out, and after breakfast announced their intention to keep their rooms the entire morning.

"But I thought we were to have a sail up the river, and call at the Piersons'," Godfrey said; and Alice, to whom the remark was addressed, replied:

"I've changed my mind, and do not care to go. You can take Gertie in my place."

"Very well," Godfrey answered, accepting the gauntlet she threw down; and going at once to Gertie, he explained that he and Robert and his sisters were going to call upon the Misses Pierson, and he would like her to accompany them.

Of all the city people in the neighborhood the Piersons had been the most polite to Gertie, and she signified at once her willingness to go. Ten was the hour fixed upon, and before

that time came Alice had changed her mind, and when Godfrey and Robert joined the ladies upon the piazza, preparatory to starting, they found Miss Creighton with them, her face a little brighter and herself very anxious about her fluted dress, which she was afraid would be crumpled with *so many* in the boat. Gertie paid no attention to the hint, and of all the party seemed to enjoy the sail and the call the most. The Misses Pierson were glad to see them, and kept them till after lunch, when Godfrey hurried them to the boat, pointing out a mass of thunder-clouds in the west, and saying they must get home before the shower. There was ample time for it, he said, but for once he miscalculated, and though he and Robert rowed with all their strength, they were but little more than half way across the river when the first rain-drops began to fall, and in a few moments the storm was upon them in peals of thunder and dashes of rain and gusts of wind which rocked the boat from side to side, and made Alice cry out with fear as she sprang up to avoid a wave which came plashing in and wet her fluted dress.

"Keep quiet, Allie, or you'll upset the boat," Godfrey said, sternly.

Alice began to cry, and whimpered that her dress was spoiled, and said some of them ought not to have come; there were too many in the boat, and she knew it all the while.

"Why didn't you stay out, then?" Julia asked; and then Alice cried harder, and wrung her hands in fear as peal after peal of thunder rolled over their heads and crashed up the mountain side, while the lurid lightning, flash after flash, broke through the inky sky, and blinding sheets of rain and wind swept down the river, threatening each moment to engulf the boat, as yet riding the waves so bravely. It was a terrible storm, and seemed to increase each moment, while the white faces looked at each other anxiously, and the pale lips made no sound until Godfrey's oar snapped in two, and a wave carried it far out upon the angry waters. Then Alice shrieked: "We are lost; we shall all be drowned," and bounding up she lost her balance and fell heavily across one side of the boat, which was instantly upset, and six human beings were struggling madly in the river

"Godfrey, Godfrey," two voices called above the storm, one loud, piercing and peremptory as if it had the right, the other tender, beseeching and low, as of a spirit going out into the darkness and saying a farewell to one it had loved so fondly.

Two voices called, "Godfrey, Godfrey," above the storm; but Godfrey heard only one, and freeing himself from something which held him fast, and which in his mad excitement he did not know was a pair of clinging hands, he struck out for the place where, just above the water, he caught one glimpse of a white, scared face, and tresses of long bright hair disappearing from his sight. With a courage and energy born of love and despair he reached the spot, and plunging his hand beneath the wave, reached for the long bright hair, felt it, clutched it firmly, and drew again into view the pallid face on which the hue of death had settled, and winding his arm about the slender waist, swam for the shore, which was fortunately so near that his feet soon touched the bottom, and he struggled up the bank with his unconscious burden. Laying it gently down, and pressing one kiss upon the white lips, he turned to retrace his steps, for a thought of Alice and his sisters had come over him, but when he saw them at some little distance down the river, struggling on their feet, he went back to Gertie, who lay in the same death-like swoon, with her hands folded upon her breast, and a smile wreathing her lips, as if her last thought had been one of peace and happiness. Very gently Godfrey lifted her up, and wringing the water from her hair, held her head upon his breast while he showered kiss after kiss upon her forehead and lips, murmuring as he did so: "Gertie, my darling, you cannot, you must not be dead. Oh, Gertie, open your eyes on me once, and hear me tell how much I love you."

But the eyes did not uncloze, nor the lips he kissed so passionately kiss him back again, and without knowing to whom he spoke, or stopping to think *who* was standing by him, he said, so sadly:

"Gertie is dead."

There was a rain of tears upon his face as he spoke, and a look of anguish in his eyes, but he met with no answering

sympathy from the motionless figure near him. It was *Alice* who stood there drenched to the skin, the fluting and the starch all out of her dress, the crimp all out of her hair, and the fire of a hundred volcanoes in the eyes which gazed so pitilessly upon the unconscious Gertie, while a smile of bitter scorn curled her lips and intense anger sounded in her voice as she said :

"Godfrey Schuyler, from this moment our paths diverge. I can have no faith in one who deliberately thrusts aside his promised wife to save the life of another. You did *this*, Godfrey Schuyler, when you knew I was drowning, and I hate you for it, and give you back your freedom with your ring."

Alice's temper had increased with every word she uttered, and snatching off the superb diamond selected by herself at Tiffany's, she threw it toward Godfrey, who, stunned and bewildered, did not at first realize what she was saying, or what she meant by it. A faint recollection he had of being clutched by somebody in the water and freeing himself from the grasp, but he did not know it was Alice, who, when she realized that he was putting her from him, felt that all hope was gone, until Julia's voice called out : "Cling to the boat, Alice ; cling to the boat, as I am doing."

The next she knew she was clinging to the boat to which she and Julia held until aid came from two boatmen who had been near them on the river when the accident occurred, and who took them safely to the shore, which Robert had reached before them with Emma at his side ! Julia had been deserted, too, and though Robert had not put her from him, he had made no effort to save her, but had grasped her sister's arm and said, in her hearing : "Don't be afraid, Emma, darling, the shore is very near ; keep your head above the water and I will not let you drown."

But for the name *Emma*, Julia might have fancied he made a mistake, but that settled it beyond a doubt ; and a pain like the cut of a knife ran through her heart as she held to the side of the boat, and saw her sister borne away by one whom she had appropriated to herself so long. Once safe upon the land

she went to the spot where Robert stood wringing the water from her sister's dress, and then, overcome with nervousness, and terror, and bitter disappointment, she uttered a low cry and fell half-fainting upon the sand. Ordinarily, Alice would have stopped to help her, but her interest was centred in that other group, farther up the river, and making her way thither, she reached it in time to hear Godfrey's words: "Open your eyes once more and hear me tell how much I love you!"

And he who said this was *her* promised husband, and she to whom he said it an obscure girl, whom, a few weeks since, Alice would have thought it impossible for one in Godfrey's position really to love. Even now she could not believe him in earnest, but there was bitter anger and resentment in her heart, prompting her in the heat of her passion to give him back his freedom with the ring, which, striking against his shoulder, bounded off and fell on Gertie's death-white face.

"Don't, you hurt her," Godfrey said, softly, as he picked up the ring and turned it over in his hand, while a perception of the truth began to dawn upon him.

"What did you say?" he asked; and Alice replied:

"I told you you were free to love your Gertie all you please, and I meant it, too, for I hate you."

"Thank you, Alice; thank you so much, only it has come too late," Godfrey replied; and slipping the ring upon Gertie's cold finger, he continued, "See, it fits; and I'd rather have it there on her dead hand than on the hand of any other woman living, but it is there too late."

Was he going crazy because of that pale girl lying there in a state so near resembling death, that it was not strange for the eye of love to be mistaken? Alice did not know; but something in his voice and manner roused the little womanly sympathy she had remaining in her then, and she said to him sharply: "I tell you she is not dead. It is only a faint, but she ought to have care. Take her somewhere, can't you? or let these men do it for you;" and she turned to the boatmen who had saved her own and Julia's life, and who had now come up with offers of assistance.

"She must be seen to ; she's in a *swound*," they said, pointing to Gertie. "Shall we carry her to the town ?"

But Godfrey would not let them touch her, and buoyed up with hope which gave him strength, he gathered the limp form in his arms and ran rather than walked toward the village.

Our house stands at the entrance of the town just on the brow of the hill, and as the storm was over I had opened the door to let in the cool, sweet air, when I saw the strange procession coming,—Godfrey with something in his arms, which I at first mistook for a child, so small it looked and so closely he held it to him : Alice following after, more like a mermaid in appearance than the ruffled and fluted and furbelowed young lady whom I was wont to see, and the two boatmen bringing up the rear with Godfrey's hat and Alice's parasol.

"What is it, Godfrey ?" I asked, as I went out to meet him, and when I saw what it was, I bade him bring her in at once, for there was no time to lose.

He laid her on my bed, and then, while one of the men went for the doctor, we did for her all we had heard must be done for the drowning, and with such good result, that when the doctor came the patient had already shown signs of returning consciousness, and the breath was plainly perceptible through the pale lips whose first word was, "Godfrey, save me !"

She thought herself still in the river, and when Godfrey, unmindful of us all, and caring little that just outside the door Alice watched and waited, bent over her, and said :

"I am here, darling ; I have saved you !" she put up both her arms and wound them round him with a convulsive clasp, while Alice came a step nearer, and stood within the room. She had exchanged her saturated clothes for a suit of mine, and with a shawl wrapped about her, stood, with chattering teeth, watching Godfrey as he unclasped the hands from his neck and rubbed them with his own, and rubbed the fair arms, and the pale forehead, and smoothed the long, damp hair, and gave the restoratives, until the blue eyes unclosed and looked at him with something more than recognition in their glance. Then Godfrey was persuaded to leave her and don the dry garments

of my brother, which had been waiting for him in an adjoining room.

As he passed out he stumbled over a little crumpled figure sitting upon a stool just inside the door, and looking down upon it, he saw that it was Alice.

"Why, Allie," he exclaimed; "I thought you had gone home! Have you been here all the time?"

"Yes, Godfrey, all the time!" and a tear stood on Alice's eyelashes, and her voice was not much like the voice which an hour before had said so bitterly, "I hate you."

Alice never harbored resentment long, and her heart was very sore as she recalled the scene on the river-bank, and wondered if Godfrey had taken her angry words in earnest and felt himself free from her. He could not,—he must not,—he was not free. He had been hers for years, and though she did not know what love was in its full extent, she had a pride in him and a liking for him such as she had never felt for any other man, and as she sat there by the door and watched him bending over the still form on the bed, she was conscious of a new sensation throbbing through her heart, and when he passed her on his way out she could hardly restrain herself from stopping him and suing for pardon. She did *not* mean what she said when in her madness she had set him free, and thrown back the ring now flashing on Gertie's finger. Alice knew where it was, and watched it with a strange gleam in her eyes, while a resolution was forming in her mind. The ring was hers, and she would have it; and rising from her seat she went swiftly to the bedside, and seizing Gertie's hand, wrenched the ring from the unresisting finger and placed it on her own.

The act must have hurt Gertie, for she winced, and, opening her eyes, said:

"Is it you, Miss Creighton? Are you safe?"

Alice did not reply: she had heard the sound of wheels, and hastened out to meet Col. Schuyler and Edith, who had come to take her and Gertie to the Hill.

Julia had recovered from her half-faint, and, supported by Robert and Emma, had walked home, and gone at once to her

room, where she was attended by her maid ; while Emma and Robert explained what had happened, and told where the rest of the party could be found.

Greatly alarmed at the account given of Gertie, Edith had come at once to take her home, if possible ; but this neither the doctor nor myself thought advisable. It was better for her to remain quietly where she was for a few days, and so the carriage returned without her, Edith promising to come again the next morning and see how she was.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE COURSE OF LOVE DOES NOT RUN SMOOTH.

JUST before leaving, Godfrey went to Gertie, and, bending over her whispered a few words so low that no one heard them except the one for whom they were intended, and whose eye brightened as he said :

“ Good-by, darling. I must go now, but shall come early to-morrow morning.”

He was holding her hand, and he noticed the absence of the ring and the scratch the stone had made when it was wrenched away. Instantly a cloud passed over his face and he looked searchingly at Gertie, but she knew nothing ; and then he glanced at me.

“ Ettie, if you find anything of value about Gertie’s person, or on the floor, keep it till I come again,” he said ; and then I knew he meant the ring, and was puzzled more than ever.

Should I tell him where it was. No ; he would see it for himself, I decided, as he went out from the room and joined his father and the ladies at the door.

Alice’s gloves were ruined, and she stood holding my waterproof around her with the bare hand on which the gem was shining. But Godfrey did not see it until he helped her into the carriage, when the stone pressed hard against his hand, making him start as if he had been stung, or, rather, as if that

ring on Alice's finger had riveted anew the fetters he had been so glad to break. How came she by it, and what did it mean? Surely not that he was hers again. A thousand times no, when he remembered the mighty love for another surging through his veins and making him so wildly happy. He was honorably free. Alice had made him so herself, and even his father could not gainsay that or think the Schuyler reputation for honor compromised in the least. A man could not marry a woman who would not marry him, who had told him so with angry words and biting sarcasms. Godfrey was in high spirits, and his manner was not like that of one who has been so near to death. He could even joke with Robert and Emma, and would have rallied Alice on her forlorn and bedraggled appearance when she came to him on the shore, if he had not remembered the scene which had followed that coming, when the ring of betrothal was hurled at him so fiercely. How it flashed and shone upon her hand, which, it seemed to him, was continually thrust upon his sight, now on the table, now on the back of the chair, now on the mantel,—everywhere he turned his eyes there was the restless hand and the diamond sparkling on it, and seeming to say to him that his freedom was not so sure. At last, when he could bear the sight no longer, he sauntered away to his father's present business-room, where he sat down alone to think of Gertie, and wonder if it would be greatly out of place for him to go and inquire for her that night instead of waiting till morning.

And while he sat thinking there was a knock upon the door, and Alice came in with a grieved look in her face and tears in her eyes, as she said :

"Have you nothing to say to me, Godfrey? You have scarcely spoken to me since the accident."

"What shall I say to you, Allie?" Godfrey asked, not unkindly; and then Alice's tears fell in torrents as she burst out, impetuously :

"Oh, Godfrey, say you do not mind what I said to you on the river-bank. I was angry, jealous, furious, because you put me away to save another, and kissed her before my eyes, and

called her your darling. I think I must have been crazed to say what I did, and throw my engagement ring away. But I have it again. I took it from her hand and put it back on mine. See, it is here ; look, Godfrey, and tell me it is just as it was with us."

To say that Godfrey was unmoved by this appeal would be wrong, for though he had never loved Alice, he did not dislike her, and would gladly have spared her pain could he have done so without compromising himself again : but he could not ; he must be frank with her now, and settle their relations to each other at once and forever, and he said to her : " But, Allie, it is *not* with us as it was, and it never can be again. I do not wish to hurt you unnecessarily, and I mean to be as gentle and kind as I'd want a great brute of a fellow to be with my sister under similar circumstances. Allie, I have never supposed that you imagined our engagement to be one of *love*. We liked each other, and were taught to think it was the proper thing for us to marry. I did not love you very much, and you did not love me——"

" But, Godfrey, I can now," Alice sobbed ; and Godfrey replied :

" Not as you will love some one else by and by ; while I,— Allie, I believe I have loved Gertie Westbrooke since she was a child, but I did not know it until I was engaged to you, and met her here a woman. Then it came upon me, and for a time I was miserable. But I meant to keep my word to you, and should have done so if you had not yourself set me free. I do not ask if you knew what you were saying. I accept the fact, and cannot go back on it. It was not a manly act to thrust you aside in the water, but I did not know what I was doing, for Gertie was drowning and calling on me to save her, and I had no thought for anything else. I shall ask her to be my wife, and if she refuses, as she may, I shall bide my time and ask her again ; have her I must ; but, Allie, you and I will be friends always, just the same, and try to forget the past summer, which has not brought much happiness to either of us. I have been constantly fighting against my love for another, and you

have been dissatisfied at not receiving from me all you had a right to expect. And it would grow worse, all the time, and it is better to end it now. If you like the ring, keep it, as you would a gift from your brother, and let me be a brother to you. I cannot be anything else. Will you, Allie?"

Never in her life had Alice Creighton prized Godfrey as she did then when she knew she was losing him, and her slight form shook with sobs, but she did not withdraw the hand he took in his, and when he said again: "Shall it be so, Allie! Shall we be friends?" she answered: "Yes, Godfrey," and hurriedly left the room.

CHAPTER XLIV.

GODFREY AND GERTIE.

ERTIE'S plunge in the river was not followed by any serious consequences, and on the morning succeeding the accident, although she was very pale and languid, she complained of nothing but weakness and soreness from the rubbings we had given her, and she came to breakfast looking like a little Quakeress in one of my sober wrappers, with only a plain linen collar around her neck, and her hair gathered into a net.

But nothing could make Gertie other than pretty, and when, just after breakfast, a step was heard on the walk, and I saw by the flush on her cheek that she knew whose step it was, I had never seen her more beautiful. Godfrey had come early, and was in the best of spirits, and so tender and loving toward Gertie that I watched him wonderingly, for I did not know what had passed between him and Alice, and could not guess how his heart was beating with joy at his freedom, and with hope for the future. He had brought her a bouquet of flowers and some grapes from the hot-house, and he hovered about her restlessly, and called her a little nun in that queer garb and mob cap, as he styled the net which he playfully pulled from her head, letting her hair fall over her shoulders, and about her face.

"There, isn't she just like some picture set in a golden frame?" he said, pushing back a stray tress from her forehead, and then stepping aside to let me see and admire, too.

How Gertie's blue eyes drooped beneath his gaze, and how the hot blood colored her cheeks, until she looked like some guilty thing cowering from shame. And Gertie did feel guilty, and as if she were usurping another's rights. She knew who it was that saved her from drowning, and she knew now that what she had thought might be a dream, must in part at least have been a reality; that amid the horrid blackness which was so much like death, Godfrey's lips had kissed hers passionately, and Godfrey's voice had called her his darling, and bade her come back to life again for the sake of the love he bore her. Yes, Godfrey had done all that, and he was doing it over again, so far as he dared, with me there in the way; and Gertie's heart beat with joy, and then was heavy as lead when she remembered Alice Creighton, and her promise to Colonel Schuyler, which she must keep, if the heavens fell.

"I am coming to see you again after lunch, but meantime, I will send you some of your things, and I want you dressed in white, with these in your hair," Godfrey said, taking from the bouquet a few forget-me-nots, which he laid in her lap. "I am going to tell you something which may astonish you, but will nevertheless make you glad, I hope, so *au revoir, ma chère*."

He kissed her, and when she drew back in surprise, he wound his arm around *my* neck, and kissed me, saying:

"You see, I serve you both alike, the old maid and the young one. Adieu."

He was off like the wind, and we could hear him going rapidly down the walk, his very step indicative of buoyant life, and vigor, and elasticity. I did not say anything to Gertie, but left her alone, while I attended to some household duties. When I returned to her after the lapse of an hour, I found her asleep on the lounge, with a troubled expression on her face and a tear on her eyelashes. The carriage from the hill was at the gate, Robert Macpherson and Emma were coming up to the door, and so I woke her and made her ready for them. Emma was

paler than usual, but there was something in the expression of her face which made her prettier than I had ever seen her before. She was quite recovered, and she was in almost as good spirits as Godfrey had been, while Robert's eyes followed her with an expression which set me to wondering if everything had been turned topsy-turvy by that accident in the river. I had a lily I wished to show Robert, who was something of a florist, and asked him into the garden.

"Yes, that's a good old Ettie,—keep him as long as you can. I want to see Gertie alone," Emma whispered to me, and as soon as we were gone she went up to Gertie and said :

"Guess now what has happened ! Robert wants *me* to be his wife,—and I thought all the while it was Julia ! He said so last night, and would have told me before but for the misfortune of his birth, which he thought I might not like. He says you know about it, and so I come to you first of all. Of course I'd rather his mother had been a lady born, and I do not quite like the thought of those Lyles and Nesbits. That's the Schuyler and Rossiter of me, while the woman in me says : 'I do not care ; a man is a man for a' that.'"

Gertie was surprised, for she too had supposed it was Julia whom Robert preferred, but she was very glad to find herself mistaken, and heartily echoed Emma's sentiment, "A man's a man for a' that."

"But what will your father say ?" she asked, and Emma replied :

"I don't know. I hope Glenthorpe will outweigh the Lyles. Robert will tell him to-night. There, he is coming, and I must go. Good-by, and come home as quick as you can. Tell Ettie, if you like."

She kissed us both, as Godfrey had done, while Robert shook hands with Gertie, who said :

"I am so glad. I supposed all the while it was Julia, or I should not have thought it could make any difference. God bless you both."

We did not expect Godfrey till after lunch, but he surprised us by coming in just as we were taking our seats at the dinner

table. He was in town, he said, and thought it a waste of labor to go home and then back again, and so he came directly to our house, and helping himself to a chair, he drew up to the table beside Gertie, to whom he devoted himself with all the assiduity of an ardent and accepted lover. I think he looked upon himself in that light, and was not in the least prepared for the disappointment awaiting him.

At the foot of our garden, overlooking the river, is an old-fashioned summer-house, covered with a luxuriant grapevine, and Godfrey asked Gertie to go there with him as soon as dinner was over. His love was of the impetuous kind, which cannot wait to know the best or worst, and once alone with Gertie and free from observation, save as the bright-eyed robin, whose nest was among the vines, looked curiously down upon him, he burst out passionately and told her of the love which had been growing in his heart since the day he found her on the deck and stole the kiss from her lips.

"I have been so hungry for another," he said, "and I had it, too, yesterday, when you lay by the water's edge, and I feared you were dead. Forgive me, darling, if I took unfair advantage of your position. I could not help it, and had you died I would have claimed you as mine and told my love to all the world."

"Oh, Godfrey, hush ; you must not speak to me like this. Remember Alice," Gertie said gaspingly, and Godfrey replied :

"I do remember her, and it is of her I must first tell you. When in my agony lest you were dead, I called you my darling and kissed your pallid lips, Alice stood beside me a witness to the love which never was hers. She was angry, as she naturally would be, and in her anger made me free from my engagement, and said she hated me and gave me back the ring of betrothal. After that she surely has no claim on me, and if she had I could not respect it now."

Then very rapidly he went over with the entire story of his *affaire du cœur* with Alice from the time they both were children and the marriage was arranged by their parents.

"I like Alice as a friend," he said ; "but I never could have

loved her as a wife, and shall not try. I have tasted a little the sweets of loving you, and nothing will satisfy me now but the full fruition of that love. Gertie, you do love me; tell me that you do, and not shrink away from me as you are trying to do."

He wound his arm around her, and drew her closely to him, while with a shudder she cried:

"Oh, Godfrey, don't ask me; take the words back, please, and do not torture me so cruelly. I cannot be your wife. I cannot. It must never be,—never. I have given my solemn promise, and I must keep it."

Then he released her, and springing to his feet, exclaimed:

"Your promise, Gertie! Your promise! What do you mean? Has any other man dared talk to you of love? Has Tom Barton——"

She saw that he misunderstood her, and said to him:

"No, Godfrey, it is not that. I am not promised in that way, but for gratitude, for honor. Your father asked it of me."

"My father? What do you mean?" Godfrey said, resuming his seat beside her, and growing very indignant and very white about the lips when Gertie told him what she meant, and that she would not break her vow.

Nothing he could say to her moved her in the least. She had promised and she should keep her word, and he must go back to Alice, who would forgive him.

"I shall never go back to her. We settled that last night," he said, and then added, quickly: "Gertie, I am not one who gives up easily, and I shall not give you up. My father himself shall remove the bar; only tell me, Gertie, truly, do you love me, and if it were not for the promise, would you be my wife?"

Oh, what a depth of love and tenderness there was in the streaming eyes lifted to Godfrey's face, as Gertie answered him so sadly:

"I am afraid I would."

"Then you shall be," Godfrey said. "I will see my father this very night and tell him the whole story, and get him to remove the interdict, and when I have his consent I shall come

straight here to you. Don't go home to-day, Gertie. Stay with Ettie another night, and wait here for me till the moon is up, and then if I do not come you may know father has goaded me to such lengths that in my desperation I have thrown myself into the river !”

He spoke lightly, and tried to laugh, but there was a load on his heart, a feeling that the interview with his father might be a stormy one, but he was ready to encounter any difficulty for Gertie's sake, and esteemed no trial too great if in the end it brought her to his arms. It was useless, he knew, to think of winning her so long as that promise to his father stood in the way, and so that was the barrier to be broken down ; but in his passion and blindness he had little fear that he should fail. Gertie was the same as his, and he told her so, and stooped to kiss her lips at parting. But she drew back from him, and said :

“No, Godfrey, I am not your promised wife, and never shall be. Your father will not consent.”

She knew Colonel Schuyler better than Godfrey did, and her heart was very heavy, as she watched him going from her, his face beaming with hope as he looked back to say :

“Wait for me here, Gertie, when the moon comes over the hills.”

I saw that something had agitated her when she returned to the house, and laying her head on my shoulder, said, “Tell me about it if you like ;” and then she told me all, and how hopeless it was for Godfrey to think his father would consent to his marriage with a poor girl like her. And though I felt that she spoke truly, I tried to encourage her, telling her that Godfrey was not one to stop at any obstacle which could be surmounted.

Later in the day Edith drove round in her phaeton to take Gertie home, but I begged to keep her another night, while Gertie, too, expressed a desire to stay, and so Edith went back without her, never suspecting the reason which Gertie had for staying with me that night.

CHAPTER XLV.

ROBERT MACPHERSON AND COL. SCHUYLER.

FROM the moment Robert bore Emma in his arms to the shore, and kissed her, as he set her safe upon the land, he knew he stood committed, and that silence was no longer possible. And so he made his confession to her, and told her of his love, and asked if she would be his wife, and the mistress of Glenthorpe. Had he been poor, with no Glenthorpe, Emma might have hesitated, for in her way she was very proud, and *good blood* was her weakness; but Robert was not poor, and she was very much in love with him, and said she would be his if her father was willing, and she thought he would be, for he had never expected as much for her as he did for Julia, whose beauty ought to command a brilliant match.

Robert was not one to delay any duty long, especially if it were a disagreeable one, and while Godfrey was breathing words of passionate love into Gertie's ear, he was closeted with Col. Schuyler and with Edith too. He had asked her to be present, from a feeling that he should find in her a powerful ally. But he had no conception of the real nature of her feelings when he told *who* he was, and said: "The man you buried in your yard, and who saved Godfrey's life, was my own uncle, the brother of my mother."

He stopped there a moment, waiting for the first shock to pass away, and Edith felt the iron fingers touch her throat slightly, while she was conscious of an impulse to grasp the young man's hand and claim him for her own kindred. But such confession on her part must not be made now. It was too late for that, and she did not speak, but listened breathlessly while Robert confessed next his love for the colonel's daughter, and asked if he might have her. Colonel Schuyler thought of Jennie Nesbit and that cottage in Alnwick, and all his family pride rose within him as he said, without a moment's hesitancy:

"I am surprised that after the fraud practised upon us so long, you should presume to ask for my daughter, especially when you consider the difference between our families. No, I cannot give her to you."

This was the colonel's reply, while Edith, who thought only of the sweet-faced, white-haired old lady knitting in the sunshine, and of the boy-lover coming to her through the twilight in the years ago, rose, and going to her husband's side said to him :

"Yes, Howard, you *will* give her to him and forgive him for the foolish pride which has so long kept him silent with regard to his mother's family."

The colonel was disturbed, and answered a little impatiently :
 "It's the family I object to, as well as the deception."

"Yes, I know," and Edith's white fingers threaded his hair caressingly. "I can imagine that ; but, Howard, consider the difference between Robert and those whom we saw in Alnwick, and remember there is a nobility from within which should level all outward distinctions. You chose *me* without money, family, or name, and Robert has all these. The Macphersons are among the first in Scotland, and you will not condemn him for the accident of his mother's birth. You can afford to be generous. Let me go for Emma now, and see you make her happy by giving her to the man she loves."

She had caressed him all the time, and her caresses did quite as much toward mollifying him as her arguments. She saw the wavering of his purpose in his eyes, and, as he did not forbid her, she went at once for Emma, whom she led into the room, and whose hand she placed in Robert's, as she said :

"Now, husband, give them your blessing, and say that you are willing."

"I cannot say I am willing," the colonel answered, in a husky voice : "but we sometimes assent to what we do not like, and if Emma wants this young man, and thinks she can be happy with him away from all her family, I will not oppose her,—only let everything be done very quietly and unostentatiously. I could not endure a parade."

And thus he gave his consent, which hurt almost as much as it pleased, though Emma put her arms around his neck, and thanked him for having made her so happy ; but Robert merely bowed his thanks, and, with a manner as lofty and haughty as that of any Schuyler, left the room. Emma soon joined him, and with her he forgot in part the little sting, and thought only of the future, when she would be his wife and the mistress of Glenthorpe, a place finer even than Schuyler Hill, with a long line of noble ancestry, and a coat-of-arms to give importance to it.

CHAPTER XLVI.

GODFREY AND HIS FATHER.

THE dinner at Schuyler Hill that day was a rather dull affair compared with what the dinners usually were ; for Alice and Julia kept their rooms with the headache, while immediately after his interview with Robert, the colonel had gone up the river a few miles on some business, which he told Edith might detain him past the dinner hour, and if so, she was not to wait. As he did not return, they sat down without him, but only Godfrey was inclined to talk. He had heard Robert's story from Robert himself, and had indorsed him heartily, and teasingly congratulated Emma for having done so much better than he ever thought she could do with her little ankles and milk-and-water face.

It was anything but milk-and-water now, and, with the blushes burning so constantly on her cheeks, and the new light in her eyes, she was very pretty to look at, as she sat at the dinner-table, and Godfrey told her so, and said it was a pity she had not been engaged before, it was so great an improvement to her, and all the time he joked and laughed he was thinking of his father, and wondering when he would be home.

Six, seven, eight, and nine, and still he had not come, and the moon would be up at ten, and Gertie waiting for him, and Godfrey paced up and down the long piazza, restless as a caged lion,

until the sound of horse's feet was heard, and the colonel came galloping up to the side door, where Godfrey met him before he had time to dismount.

"Father," he said, "I have waited for you more than three hours. I must speak with you at once. Come in here, please."

And he led the way to the same room where Robert had declared his love for Emma, and where Gertie had given her promise not to listen to Godfrey without his father's consent.

And Godfrey was there to ask that consent, and he plunged at once into the matter, and told his story so rapidly and emphatically that his father had no chance to utter a syllable, even had he wished to do so, but sat motionless and confounded while Godfrey poured out his burning words, and declaring his love for Gertie, asked that his father should remove the ban, and make Gertie free to be his wife. Godfrey could not have chosen a more inopportune time for the success of his suit. The colonel had borne a great deal that day. His pride had been sorely wounded in giving his daughter to a son of the Lyles, and now came Godfrey, telling him of his broken engagement with Alice, and asking his consent to a marriage with Gertie Westbrooke, a girl who, for aught he knew, was connected with a lower family even than the Lyles, and who at least had no money to bring him. This really was the sorest point with Colonel Schuyler. His business that afternoon had been with the agent of a firm which owed him a large sum of money, and which had declared its inability to pay, so that he had returned a poorer man by fifty thousand dollars than he had supposed himself to be. And this was from the portion he had set apart for Godfrey.

Just after the birth of little Arthur, the colonel had made his will, dividing his property about equally, as he thought, between his wife and children, and designating the bonds, or lands, or moneys each should have. Strangely enough, all the losses he had met with since had been from Godfrey's share. For this, however, the colonel had consoled himself with the fact that Alice Creighton's fortune would make amends for all, and now he was told that Alice was set aside, and his son

would wed with poverty. He was confounded, and indignant, and angry, and said many bitter things, and utterly refused to release Gertie from her promise.

"Tell her from me," he said, "that I will hold her to it as long as I live, and she must beware how she breaks her word, pledged so solemnly."

And that was all the satisfaction Godfrey got. His father would not listen to his love for Gertie, and insisted upon his returning to his allegiance to Alice :

"Never, while I have my senses. I do not dislike Allie as a friend, but I shall never make her my wife. It is Gertie, or nobody," Godfrey said.

And so the interview which had lasted a long time ended, and just as the clock was striking half-past ten a white-faced young man, with lips firmly compressed, and a look of determination in his eyes, went rapidly down the avenue, leaving behind a whiter-faced man, who had said to him :

"If Gertie breaks her word and marries you, remember it will be disinheritance."

Now to one as madly in love as Godfrey, disinheritance did not seem so very dreadful. It was not half as bad as losing Gertie, and as he walked away from the Hill he thought how pleasant it would be to work for Gertie, and deny himself, if need be, that she might live in comfort. There was his cottage ; disinheritance could not take that from him, for it was his own, and he had the deed. They could live there for awhile on almost nothing, and should get along somehow.

It was the same old story, always new, of young people with more love in their hearts than money in their purses. "They would get along somehow ;" and Godfrey's spirits were very light, and his cheery whistle sounded through the still night air as he drew near the summer-house, where Gertie was to wait for him.

CHAPTER XLVII.

WAITING.



GERTIE had been very restless the entire day, and when at last the sun went down, and there wanted but a few hours of the time when Godfrey was to return, her cheeks were burning with fever, and she was far more fit for bed than for the summer-house, where the fog from the river was making itself felt, and the night damp was falling. But I could not persuade her. Godfrey had said: "Wait for me here when the moon comes over the hills," and she would do it if a hundred fevers had been burning in her veins. She had no hope, she said, that Colonel Schuyler would relent, and if he did not she must keep her vow, though her heart broke in doing it. Still I think there was a shadowy hope, which buoyed her up during the first half hour of waiting. She had expected him to be with her before the moon came over the hill, and when the first silvery light fell on the opposite shore, and the woods began to grow less dark and sombre, she grew restless and nervous, and complained of being cold, while the bright flush faded from her cheeks and lips, and left them pale as marble. The whole river now was flecked with patches of moonlight, and the summer-house, with the shrubbery around it, began to stand out in shadows, as the moon crept higher and higher up the eastern horizon. And still he did not come, and Gertie's teeth were chattering and her hair was wet with dew, and I was about to insist upon her going in, when through the stillness a footstep sounded,—a rapid, elastic footstep,—and we heard next a merry whistle on the road not far away. Godfrey was coming; he had been successful, or he would never have come so blithely. So Gertie thought,—so I believed, and I stole away to the house, leaving the lovers alone in their interview, which lasted more than an hour, and at its close left the two young hearts which loved each other so fondly, sore and

full of pain. For Gertie would not break her word so solemnly pledged.

"I love you so much," she said, when he had exhausted every argument in his power to win her to his opinion, "and I would so gladly be poor with you, and work so hard for you if I could do it without sin; but I cannot; I promised I would not marry you without your father's consent, and I must keep my word. But I did not promise not to love you, and I can do that and will, forever and ever. And now good-by. Don't go to the house with me. Don't kiss me," she cried, as he made a motion to clasp her in his arms. "You must not do that; and, Godfrey, you say you shall leave Hampstead tomorrow. Don't part from your father in anger. Don't for my sake; and, Godfrey—" her voice shook a little here—"and—und—try to love Alice,—do,—and be happy with her,—and—never mind about me."

She broke from him then, and came rapidly to the house where I received her, and removing the shawls, wet with the heavy dew, rubbed and chafed her cold hands and feet and got her to bed as soon as I could, while in my heart was a dire foreboding of what might follow this excitement and long exposure to the night air, in her already weakened condition. Nor were my forebodings groundless, and Godfrey did not leave home the following day as he meant to do. With his travelling bag and shawl he came past our house on his way to the train and stopped at the door a moment to ask for Gertie, but when I led him to her room where she lay burning with fever and talking of him and his father, and the little hot berth in the steamer where she had been so sick, he put his satchel and shawl in the corner, and drawing his chair near her bedside sat there all day long, while the doctor came in and out and said it was the result of exposure that day on the river, and that with ordinary care he apprehended no danger. Edith, too, came down with Emma, whom I hardly knew with the new happiness shining in her face and making her so sweet and gentle. Both were very anxious about Gertie, and the latter remained all night, and watched with Godfrey, by the sick girl, who paid no

heed to either of them, but kept asking for Col. Schuyler. And the next day he came and stood by her, and taking her hot hands in his asked her what she wanted.

She seemed to know him, and replied :

"To tell you that I have not told a lie. I've kept my promise, though it broke my heart to do it, but I could not tell a lie even for the love I have for Godfrey."

I do not know what he said to her, but he was very pale when he came from the sick-room, and he spoke pleasantly to Godfrey, and made no objections to his being there. But he did not come again or see his son, who stayed until Gertie was out of danger. Then he asked to see her for just one moment, but what occurred at the interview I cannot say. I only know that at its close Godfrey's voice was husky and thick as he wrung my hand, and said :

"Farewell, Ettie ; be good to her. I don't know if I'll ever come home again."

Then he went away, and I found Gertie in a kind of faint, from which she did not recover until long after I heard the whistle of the train which took Godfrey to New York.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

GIVING IN MARRIAGE.

IT was soon known in Hampstead, not who Robert Macpherson was, but that he was to marry Emma Schuyler, instead of the haughty Julia, to whom every one had given him. Julia was not a favorite in town, and when it was rumored that she was bitterly disappointed, and that the headache which had confined her to her room for several days was owing more to her disappointment than to cold taken in the river, I think the lower class rejoiced to know that even her proud heart could ache and her scornful eyes weep from humiliation. Of Alice's grief nothing was known outside the house on the Hill, though many comments were made concerning God-

frey's stay with Gertie when she was so sick, and his devotion to her was imputed to a feeling stronger than friendship for the beautiful girl so popular with everybody. But nobody dreamed of the broken engagement which the colonel tried to mend, bidding Alice wear the ring as if nothing had happened, and encouraging her to believe that all would yet be well between herself and Godfrey. The colonel had faith in Gertie and knew she would keep her word, and hoped and believed that what he had desired so long would ultimately come to pass.

Emma's wedding was to be a very quiet morning affair at the church, with a breakfast afterward at the house, and then the married pair were to go at once to New York and embark the following day for England.

By mere accident Julia had heard something of Robert's antecedents, and as she insisted upon knowing the whole, Emma had told her who Robert was, and the knowledge had gone far toward reconciling the proud girl to her loss.

Emma was welcome to a nephew of the Lyles, she said, with a haughty toss of her head, and when Tom Barton, who was still keeping sober for Gertie's sake, was suggested to her as groomsman she did not object, and received him graciously when he came round to talk the matter over. Alice was to be the other bridesmaid, and it was confidently expected that Godfrey would stand with her. But this he refused to do, saying in his letter to his father that he should not be present at the ceremony. His coming home could only bring pain to himself and others, and he chose to remain in New York, where he should see Emma before she sailed and make it right with her. When Alice heard this she took the ring from her finger a second time, and inclosing it in a blank sheet of paper sent it back to Godfrey, with the feeling that all was really over between them, and that he never would be hers even if he did not marry Gertie. How she hated her rival, and how glad she was to know that she would not be present at the wedding.

"If she comes here I certainly shall leave, for the same roof cannot cover us both for a single hour, she said.

But she had nothing to fear from Gertie, who was neither

able nor desirous of attending the wedding. She saw both Robert and Emma frequently, and through the former was carrying out the plan she had formed when he first told her who he was, and gave her the cairngorms from his grandmother. Then she had thought: "If Julia marries Robert I will divide the stones with her, for no one can have a better right to them than Robert's wife;" and now that it was Emma instead of Julia, she was far better satisfied, and sent a part of the stones to New York, where they were made into bracelets, ear-rings and pin as her present to the bride.

It is not my intention to linger long over that wedding, which came off on one bright morning in September, and at which no one was present save a few intimate friends. Julia, as bridesmaid, was very beautiful, we heard, and at the breakfast coquetted a good deal with Tom, who, after all was over, and the bridal pair gone, came and told us all about it, and said Alice nearly took his head off when he joked her about Godfrey's absence.

"And if you believe me, she is kind of sweet on the rector," he said; "and now that everything seems to be topsy-turvy and upside down, I would not be surprised if she became our rectoress some day. Wouldn't she be a jolly one though, with all her cranks and furbelows."

She had gone to New York with the bridal party, and Julia had gone, too, so that they were very lonely at Schuyler Hill, and within a day or two Edith came for Gertie to go home.

"Col. Schuyler wishes it; he misses you, I think, almost as much as I do," Edith said, and that availed to take Gertie back more than anything else, I think.

It was the colonel himself who met her at the door, and led her into the house, and told her she was welcome home, and he was glad to see her. And he did seem happier for having her again, and as it was through him she had suffered so much, he tried by every means in his power to make amends, and withheld from her nothing save the one thing which alone could bring the color back to her face, and ease the heavy pain at her heart. Godfrey was studying very hard at his profession, and wrote occasionally to his father stiff, formal letters, pertaining wholly

to his health or business, and not at all like the funny, rollicky epistles he had been wont to dash off when he was not as sad and spiritless as now. Once he wrote to Gertie, but she did not answer the letter, though she asked Edith to write and say she had received it, and that he must not write again. Those October days were very dreary ones to Gertie, and she was glad when at last there came a diversion to her thoughts, in the shape of a guest who appeared one day so suddenly and unexpectedly at Schuyler Hill, and of whom I will speak in another chapter.

CHAPTER XLIX.

MRS. DOCTOR BARRETT.

HE guest was Mrs. Dr. Barrett, and she came one dreary day in November, unannounced and unexpected, her white puffs of hair just as smooth as ever, her mourning just as deep and her black eyes just as restless and eager as she walked up the avenue and looked curiously about her. She had accidentally stumbled upon Godfrey in New York while walking down Broadway, and recognizing him at once had seized him by the arm, and to his utter amazement, claimed him as her grandson by marriage. It was not in Godfrey's nature to be other than polite to any woman, and so adroitly did Mrs. Barrett manage, that when at last he left her seated in the car which was to take her to Hampstead, he found himself out of pocket just ten dollars, which had gone for carriage hire, and lunch and stage fare, and ticket to Hampstead.

"But then a fellow must do something for his *step-grand-mother-in-law*," he said to Tom Barton, who chanced to be in the city, and to whom he related his experience, adding that he hardly thought the worthy woman was expected at Schuyler Hill.

Nor was she. But Mrs. Barrett was not one who cared particularly for the feelings of others. Regularly twice a year

since her daughter's marriage she had received money from Colonel Schuyler, and never in her life had she been more comfortable and free ; but this did not satisfy her so long as she knew that across the sea was a luxurious home, which she felt she had a right to enjoy. It was more than six years now since her daughter's marriage, and in all that time there had been no wish expressed to see her, no invitation for her to come, and she was tired of waiting and weary of her present idle life, while to do her justice there was in her heart a genuine desire to see her child's face once more, and hear the sound of her voice. So, when her money came as usual in October, with a letter from Edith, who told of Emma's marriage, and said that Julia was also gone, and she was alone with her husband, Arthur and Gertie, Mrs. Barrett's decision was made, and giving up her pleasant rooms which she had occupied so long, she started for America, and arrived at Hampstead on a November day when the wind sighed drearily through the trees and rustled the dead leaves at her feet as she passed slowly up the avenue leading to Schuyler Hill. She had walked from the station, and taking the road which led past her old home, had paused a moment by the gate, looking at the pretty cottage and thinking of all that had happened since the day Abelard was carried through the gate up to the little cemetery she could see in the distance.

Edith was out that afternoon, and only Gertie was at home when Mrs. Barrett rang and asked first for Mrs. Schuyler and then for Miss Westbrooke.

"An old lady in black, with puffs of white hair," the servant said to Gertie, who, without a thought as to who it could be, went down to meet the stranger.

"Oh, Mrs. Barrett," she cried, when she caught sight of the well-remembered features. "I did not dream of seeing you. When did you come? Oh, I *am* so glad, and so will Mrs. Schuyler be. I wish she were here."

There was no question as to Gertie's joy, and Mrs. Barrett wished she was as sure of as hearty a welcome from her own daughter as she received from this stranger, who was removing her bonnet and shawl and talking to her so far.

"You must be very tired, and I'd take you to your room at once; only I hardly know which Mrs. Schuyler would wish you to have. The best, though, of course, as you are her mother. Yes, I think I'll venture that. Come with me, please;" and Gertie led the way up the broad, long stairs to the guest chamber of the house, the one reserved for people like Mrs. Gen. Morton and Mrs. Gov. Strong, who sometimes visited at Schuyler Hill.

But Mrs. Barrett knew better than to take it. *She* was not so sure of Edith's delight, while the colonel, she felt, would never forgive her if he found her in his best room. So she said to Gertie:

"I do not believe I had better take this, as I shall probably remain a long time, and a smaller, plainer chamber will do for me,—one near you, if I can have it," she added, with an instinctive feeling that in Gertie she should find her strongest ally and friend.

"Come to my room, then, and wait. Mrs. Schuyler will soon be here," Gertie said, and while she spoke, there was the sound of wheels, and looking through the blinds, Mrs. Barrett saw her daughter in her carriage coming up the avenue, and scanned her curiously.

"What a great lady she is, though," she said, aloud, "and what a handsome house. I wonder if she blames me now?"

From having lived alone so much, Mrs. Barrett had acquired the habit of talking to herself, and she was startled when she met Gertie's eyes fixed wonderingly upon her, and became aware that she was speaking her thoughts aloud.

"That's she; that's Edith; I hear her voice," she said, beginning to tremble with excitement, and anticipation, and dread. "Would you mind telling her I'm here?" she added, feeling intuitively that if she was to have a shock Gertie would stand between her and the battery, and thus make it easier to bear.

"Certainly, I'll tell her," Gertie replied, while there began to dawn upon her a faint suspicion that possibly Mrs. Barrett might not be altogether welcome.

Edith had never voluntarily mentioned her mother in Gertie's hearing, and when the latter spoke of her, as she sometimes did, she turned the conversation at once into another channel. This Gertie now remembered, and when she added to it the few words Mrs. Barrett had inadvertently let fall about her daughter's blaming her, she felt sure there was some misunderstanding between mother and daughter; and while she stood firmly by Edith, as the one probably least in fault, she felt a great pity for the tired, worn woman, whose face was so much paler and thinner than when she last saw it, and she resolved to do the best for her she could.

"Oh, Mrs. Schuyler," she said, meeting the lady at the foot of the stairs, and detaining her there while she spoke. "Wait a moment, please, before you go up. I have some good news for you, real good, too. And you will be so glad. I was, and she is nothing to me either. Guess who has come?"

Edith could not guess, though a thrill ran through her nerves, and without the slightest reason for it she felt the touch of the iron fingers at her throat, and her voice was a whisper as she asked:

"Who is it, Gertie?"

"Your mother, and she is so tired and pale, and is trembling all over to see you," Gertie replied, surer than ever, from the expression of Edith's face, that there was something unpleasant between them.

"My mother! My mother here, in this house," Edith said, and her voice, which she had recovered, reached to the upper hall where her mother stood, hearing the words and feeling them like so many stabs, for she knew now she was not welcome.

Edith was not glad, though her feelings were less for herself than for her husband. Try as she might she had never been able quite to forgive her mother for the false position in which her falsehood had placed her, and she felt she could never trust her again. Still she was her mother, and nothing could undo that, and she was there in her house, unasked, it is true, but as a mother, she had, perhaps, a right to come; or would have had, if the husband had not expressed himself so decidedly

against it ; and that was where Edith felt most keenly. What would Col. Schuyler say ? Would he blame her ? And would the result be estrangement and coldness between them ? That something would come of it she was sure, and as if she already felt the shadow of the *something* which would result from that visit of her mother's, and threaten both her life and reason, she stood a moment unable to move while Gertie stared at her amazed, and the mother still stood waiting in the hall above. Recovering herself at last she went slowly up the stairs, and on toward her own room, where she naturally expected to find her visitor. But Mrs. Barrett was at the other end of the hall, and called to her : " Here, Edith ; here I am ; here's your poor old mother."

Then Edith turned and went swiftly to the spot, and, touched by the trembling voice and the tired, white face, which had grown so old, forgot everything for a moment, and winding her arms around her mother's neck, kissed her lovingly, and then leading her to her own room, shut the door and sat down to look at her.

" You didn't expect me, I know," Mrs. Barrett began, in a half defiant, half apologetic tone ; " and perhaps I did wrong to come ; but I was so tired of living alone, with nothing to do but think from one day to another ; and then I wanted so much to see you, in the handsome home I got for you. A mother has a right to visit her child, you know."

This she said because of the expression on Edith's face, which she could not understand any more than she could realize that the refined, elegant woman clad in velvet and ermine was her daughter,—her own flesh and blood. Edith had grown far away from her mother, and there was scarcely a sentiment in common between them. Still she wished to do right, and when her mother said what she did, she replied :

" Yes, certainly, you have a right ; and I am——"

She did not get any further, for the voice which made her start as it said :

" Edith, my dear, whose is all that remarkable-looking baggage down in the hall which I stumbled over just now ?"

Colonel Schuyler had ridden round to the stable, and giving his horse to the care of the groom, had entered the house through the side hall, where Mrs. Barrett's numerous boxes and bundles had been deposited by the express man, who, as the lady was not in sight, made a little charge against the colonel for bringing it from the station. Mrs. Barrett believed in having things secure, and in addition to locks and hasps had tied her boxes with cords and ropes, which, with the marks of age and travel, gave them a "remarkable appearance" indeed, and the colonel stumbled over them and struck his ankle against the sharp corner of one of them, and he was suffering from the pain when he put the question to his wife, without a thought that the obnoxious baggage was part and parcel of his mother-in-law, who sat a little in the shadow, and whom he did not see till Edith said to him :

"Why, it must be *mother's* baggage. I did not know it was here. Howard, see ! here's mother !—come all the way from England !"

Edith was as near hysterical as she well could be and not break down entirely, while the colonel was confounded, and amazed, and indignant, altogether. When he knocked his ankle against the box and saw the bits of rope, he had thought of the Lyles, and wondered if it could be they were claiming relationship so soon ; and now it was even worse than the Lyles,—it was a mother-in-law whom he did not like, and to whom he had sent larger sums of money every year for the sake of keeping her where he wished her to remain. But she was here in his house, and had evidently come to stay, and he must not be rude to her for Edith's sake ; so he made a great effort to be civil, and said :

"Ah, yes,—your mother ! Mrs. Barrett, how do you do ? I am,—yes, I am sure I am very much,—yes,—taken by surprise. When did you come ? You must be very tired. Edith, my dear, hadn't you better show her to her room ?"

He had made his speech, and, anxious to be rid of her, asked Edith to take her away ; and Edith, who breathed more freely now that the worst was over, arose, and bidding her mother fol

low her, conducted her to the small but pleasant room adjoining Gertie's and communicating with it by means of a door. To Edith it seemed that her mother was safer near to Gertie, while Mrs. Barrett was delighted with the arrangement, especially as Gertie signified her willingness to have the door kept open when Mrs. Barrett liked.

It was known in the kitchen by this time that the soiled, jaded little woman with the queer-looking baggage was Mrs. Schuyler's mother, and among the servants there was much talk and speculation concerning her. Had she come to stay? was she expected? was the colonel glad to see her? and what was she, anyway? Mrs. Tiffe knew all about the lodgers and the plain sewing, while the lower grade of servants knew a great deal more, and had among them a tradition that Mrs. Schuyler's mother once sat under an umbrella in the streets of London, and sold gingerbread, and apples, and peanuts, and boot-lacings. And now she was here to be treated like Mrs. Schuyler herself, and John sniffed a little contemptuously when he went in to wait upon the family at dinner.

But there was nothing to sniff at in the highly respectable-looking woman, whom Gertie had helped to dress in her best black silk, with the widow's cap set jauntily above the snow-white puffs of hair, and the air of quiet dignity which Mrs. Barrett knew so well how to assume, even when unusually embarrassed as she was now, with so much grandeur and display around her, and Edith mistress of it all. Truly, she did a good thing when she withheld the letter which would so surely have changed her daughter's life, she thought, when she was alone in her room that night, and free to recall the chain of events which had resulted in her being there.

Edith, too, was thinking, and her thoughts kept her awake until long after midnight, when, as she was about falling away to sleep, she was startled by the sound of a groan, which seemed to come from her mother's room, and a moment after Gertie knocked at her door, saying :

"Please, Mrs. Schuyler, I think Mrs. Barrett is very sick."

In a moment Edith was out of bed and knotting the cord of

her dressing-gown with trembling hands, while the colonel, also roused from his first deep sleep, and remembering Mrs. Rogers, who had gotten Edith up at midnight, wondered to himself "why these people would always persist in being sick at such inopportune times, and send for Edith to help them."

The colonel was very sleepy and a little inclined to be unreasonable, and, after Edith had gone to her mother, he lay awake for a long time listening to the sound of voices in Mrs. Barrett's room, the shutting of doors, the footsteps in the hall, and the general commotion, until he began to wonder if for Edith's sake he ought not to get up and see what was the matter.

Ere long, however, he heard Mrs. Tiffe say to one of the maids, as she passed his door, that it was nothing but *cramps* and a good deal of *hypo*; and thus reassured he composed himself to sleep, and did not waken, when, in the gray of the early morning, Edith crept shivering to his side.

CHAPTER L.

THE STORM GATHERING.

IT was more than the *cramps* and the *hypo* which ailed Mrs. Barrett, though at first it seemed much like both, and after seeing her fall away to sleep, Edith went to her own room without a thought of danger. But later in the morning, when she stood again by her mother's bedside, and saw how pinched her features were, and how old and worn she looked without her teeth and puffs of hair, and how weak and helpless she seemed, she began to feel some alarm and sent for the physician at once. It was a severe cold, the doctor said, and there was no danger to be apprehended; but Mrs. Barrett thought differently. She had a settled conviction that the sickness coming on so fast was her last. She had only

come to America to die, and Edith would not long be troubled with her, she said, in reproachful tones, which she meant should make her daughter sorry that she had not been more pleased to see her. And Edith was sorry, and made every possible amends by nursing her herself, and staying constantly with her.

And yet with all the care Mrs. Barrett grew worse, and every succeeding day found her weaker than the preceding one had left her. She did not seem to have any vitality or rallying force, and without any real disease sank so fast that within two weeks after her arrival in Hampstead, she came to the point where she looked death in the face and knew he was waiting for her.

There was no hope, and her only share in Edith's grandeur would be a costly coffin and a great funeral, when many would look upon her face, never dreaming that they had seen it before. That was all, and she knew it now, and as earth began to fade away, and the realities of the next world loomed darkly in the distance, remorse came hand in hand with the shadow of death, and filled her heart with horror and anguish when she remembered the past and her sad, wasted life. It was no comfort to her now that the baptismal waters had once bedewed her head, and she been numbered outwardly with the children of God. To her there had never been any reality in religion. Everything was done for effect, and because it was respectable. For her there was no efficacy in Jesus' blood, no heart yearnings after His presence, or tears because she could not feel Him with her. Even her praying had only been in public when it was the proper thing to do, for by herself she never prayed, never till now, when she stood face to face with death, and felt her burden of guilt and sin rolling over her like a mountain, and crushing her to the earth. Then conscience awoke, and like David she cried :

"My sin is ever before me."

Oh, that one particular sin ! How it haunted her day and night, seeming so much larger than all the rest, and making her shrink away from Edith's presence and cover her head with the bed-clothes, so as not to see the face bending so kindly over

her. For many long years she had slighted the Holy Spirit, and trampled on her conscience, until it would almost seem that the one was hard as a rock and the other flown forever. But God's mercy is infinite, and He was giving her another chance, and leading her back to Himself through that thorny path her own deeds had made for her feet to walk in. At last when she could bear the anguish no longer, and must speak to some one, she said to Gertie, who was sitting with her that night :

"Gertie, are you a Christian? Do you ever pray?"

The question was very abrupt, and Gertie's face flushed, and she waited a little before answering :

"Yes, I pray, and hope I am a Christian in the sense you mean. And *you* are a Christian, too?" she added, after a pause ; and Mrs. Barrett said quickly :

"No, never. There was nothing real ; all was for effect, and now it is like so many scorpions stinging me to madness, and one act hurts me worse than all the rest. Gertie, if you had done something very wicked years ago, something which nobody in the wide world knew besides you, but which concerned another very, very much, *what* would you do? you, who pray and hope you are a Christian?"

Ordinarily Gertie would have thought herself too young and inexperienced to offer advice to one so much her senior, and whom she had believed so good a woman, but now words seemed put into her mouth, and she answered unhesitatingly :

"I should ask God to forgive me ; and if the person so much concerned was within my reach I should confess it to him, I think."

There was a bitter cry, and Gertie saw great drops of sweat on Mrs. Barrett's brow as she moaned :

"Yes, that is it,—only I must reverse it. Confess to her first, and then I can dare to pray, which I cannot now. Oh, Gertie, Gertie,—never, never tell a lie as long as you live."

She was very much excited, and seemed at times to be out of her head, and talked queer things of the *blue-eyed baby*, "the child who she thinks is dead."

"Oh, where is it now, and what was its fate?" she kept whispering to herself, and once, as Gertie bent over her to bathe her head, she said, "Are you she,—the girl, the child, you know?"

"No, I am only Gertie; try to sleep and not talk any more to-night. You will be better in the morning and can tell Mrs. Schuyler," Gertie said, feeling intuitively that Edith was the person concerned in the secret troubling the guilt'y woman so much.

She was sure of it when Mrs. Barrett answered:

"Yes, I must tell her. I must. Heaven give me strength to do it."

Perhaps this was the first genuine prayer she had ever made, and as if already better for it she became more quiet and slept sweetly till the dawn of the morning, when Edith came to see how she had passed the night and relieve Gertie of her watch.

"Go to bed now, child," she said, "and I will see that you are not called till lunch. You must be very tired."

Gertie obeyed, and going to her own room, the adjoining one, was soon in a deep sleep, while Edith took her place by Mrs. Barrett's bedside.

CHAPTER LI.

THE STORM BURSTS.

ARE you cold?" Edith asked, as she saw how her mother trembled, and taking one of the hands which lay outside the bed, she was going to chafe and rub it, when her mother snatched it away, and raising herself upright, cried out:

"Don't touch me, Edith, till you have heard my story, then curse me if you will and let me die; but first open that square box there in the corner, and in my writing desk find the letter

you wrote to *him*,—you know,—the letter which I kept, —*you* remember it."

Edith remembered it well, and she trembled in every joint as she did her mother's bidding, and brought the time-soiled letter, which seemed to burn the hand which held it, and to communicate to her a presentiment of the terrible shock awaiting her. That her mother's story had something to do with her past life she was sure, but she never dreamed of the truth as she brought the letter and offered it to her mother.

"No, it's for you ; keep it, Edith. You will want it some time, perhaps, to prove that you at least meant fair. I have written a few lines on it myself to show your innocence," Mrs. Barrett said, and Edith put the letter mechanically into the pocket of her dressing-gown, while her mother continued : "Edith, before I begin, promise me one thing,—not your forgiveness,—I do not expect that,—but promise to do what I ask when my story is finished."

"How can I promise to do a thing unless I know it will be right?" Edith asked.

"It is right," Mrs. Barrett said ; "I'd do it myself, only I am old and sick and going to die, and I did not think about it in England as I do here on my death-bed. But you are young ; you have health and money and time. You can look it up, and you will, Edith. You *will* when you know."

She spoke in a whisper, and Edith shook from head to foot, as she, too, said in a whisper :

"Yes, mother, I will."

She did not know what she was pledged to do. She only knew that the terror of something horrible was upon her, numbing her faculties, chilling her blood, and forcing her heart into her throat, which the iron hand held so firmly. It was something about *the child*, her little girl,—something about the way it died ; and her brown eyes were black in the intensity of her feelings as she fastened them upon her mother, who cowering beneath that gaze, cried out :

"Look away, Edith ; look somewhere else, and not at me or I can never tell you."

But the eyes did not move, and shutting her own, the wretched woman began :

"You remember I took your letter and did not give it to him, but told him what I pleased. Have you ever told him the truth?"

Edith could not so much as articulate the one word *no*, and when, as she continued silent, her mother's eyes unclosed and looked inquiringly at her, she only shook her head in token that she had not.

"Then you must do it now! There's no other way. You'll need his co-operation," Mrs. Barrett said, and Edith's eyes were like flaming coals of fire as they confronted her so steadily.

"Edith," her mother went on, "do you remember the dreary room in Dorset Street, and the day it rained so hard?"

Did she remember it? Ask rather if she ever could forget it, when, even now, after the lapse of so many years, she never heard the sound of rain against the windows or saw it falling in the street, that she did not recall that dreadful day of fog and rain and darkness when her child was taken from her. But she could not speak, and her mother continued :

"I took the baby from you and carried her to the hospital, and then, when you insisted upon going after her, I went in your place, and when I came back I told you,—oh, Edith, don't look at me, don't curse me yet. I told you sh-she,—sh-she——"

"You told me she was dead. Was *that* a lie, too?"

Edith could speak now, though the effort to do so almost tore open her throat, where her heart seemed palpitating so wildly. Seizing her mother's shoulder she shook it fiercely as she put the question :

"Was that a *lie*, too?"

"Yes, Edith, *that was a lie, too!*"

Mrs. Barrett's voice was a whisper, but had the words been uttered in tones of thunder they could not have written themselves more distinctly on Edith's mind than they did.

"*That was a lie, too!*" she repeated, rising to her feet, and

seeming, to her horror-stricken, remorseful parent to grow tall and terrible in her excitement, as she clutched the shoulder more fiercely, and said : "That was a *lie*, too, was it? Mother, as you hope for heaven tell me the whole truth now. Baby was not dead *then* when you said she was?"

"No, Edith, not dead then——"

"*Is she dead now?*" and the hand pressed so hard upon the thin shoulder that Mrs. Barrett cringed with pain, but did not shake it off, and scarcely knew what was hurting her, as she replied :

"I don't know, Edith."

"*You don't know!* Tell me what you *do* know, and tell me truly, too, as you will one day confess to heaven when you are questioned of the great wrong done to me."

Edith was wonderful in her excitement, with her blazing eyes and livid face, and her mother gazed at her an instant fascinated and unable to reply ; then, closing her eyes again, she said :

"I will tell you all I know. I went to the hospital and meant to bring her to you. I did, Edith,—believe me there. I meant to bring her to you, for I knew no other way. But when I inquired for the child *Heloise* left there at such a time, I was told that it had been taken by a woman whose name was *Stover*. The woman had given good references, they said, and was the mother of one of the nurses. She, too, lived in Dorset Street, not far from our old quarters. I've got the number,—there, on that letter you wrote to Colonel Schuyler,—and three or four months afterward I went there and inquired for the woman, but she was dead, and the people who occupied the floor above said her daughter had taken the baby and gone away with it in a handsome carriage, and *that* is all I know,—truly, Edith, *all I know*. I've never been able to trace her, though I tried once, just after you left me to come here. I missed Gertie so much, and wanted her so much that I began to think of looking for the grandchild, who would have been about her age, and I tried to find her, but could not. I don't believe she is dead. I never have, and you, with money and influence, can track her sure, and you will ; this is what you promised. I shall be dead, but

shall rest easier in my grave if you find her. Edith, why don't you speak, if it is only to curse me. Anything is better than this awful silence," she implored, and then, as there came no answer, she opened her eyes and turned them toward her daughter, who stood over her as white and rigid as if frozen into stone.

Her hand had let go its grasp of her mother's shoulder and hung listlessly down by her side, her eyes seemed fixed on vacancy, though in reality they were seeing that little blue-eyed baby up in some square room in Dorset Street, surrounded with wretchedness and poverty, while she, the mother, was rolling in wealth, with luxury and elegance everywhere. Truly it was a terrible picture to contemplate, but not so terrible as the second one presented to her mind, the picture of a young girl grown to womanhood, as that blue-eyed baby must be, and sunk, perhaps to the lowest depths of misery and possible shame, for who was there to teach her, to keep her feet from straying when the mother had abandoned her? It was this which affected Edith the most, and froze her almost to catalepsy during the moment she stood without the power to speak or stir, her head bent forward, her hands hanging down, her eyes fixed and glassy, and a white froth oozing from her lips, which moved at last, and said, slowly, painfully :

"May Heaven forgive you, mother, for I never can!"

Another moment and Edith fell heavily across the foot of the bed, while Mrs. Barrett's loud shriek roused Gertie from sleep and brought her to the room.

"It's a fit,—she is dying,—she is dead," Mrs Barrett murmured, pointing to Edith, who for hours lay in a stupor which seemed like death, and from which nothing had power to rouse her.

Gertie had summoned help at once, and the colonel was the first in the room, and held his fainting wife in his arms, and felt a mortal fear steal over him when he saw the deadly paleness and the foam about the lips, the purple rings beneath the eyes, and the head drooping so heavily on his shoulder. It was overtasking her strength, and sitting up so much with her mother, he thought, and the doctor thought so too, and when before the sunsetting they buried in the cemetery the little daughter

whose eyes never opened in this world, and whom Edith never saw, they were sure it was over-exertion at a time when she needed all her strength, and the colonel's affection for his mother-in-law was *not* perceptibly increased. *She* had offered no explanation whatever with regard to the fit, except that it came suddenly, when Edith was standing by her. Indeed she was nearly distracted herself, and Gertie, who watched by her, would not have been surprised to see her life go out at any moment.

For some reason there seemed to be a strong prejudice in the house against the woman. Nobody wanted to wait on her, nobody wanted to go near her, and so Gertie became her sole nurse, though she wished so much to be with Mrs. Schuyler, who was raving in the room across the hall, and whom it sometimes took two men to hold.

But Gertie's duty was plain, and she stayed with the poor old woman, who clung to her like a child, talking strange things at times, and asking questions hard for Gertie to answer.

"Would God forgive her sin? Was there yet hope for her?"

This was the burden of her sorrow; and many times in the day, and during the night-watches she kept so tirelessly, Gertie knelt and prayed that every sin, however great, committed by the wretched woman, might be forgiven and washed away in Jesus' blood.

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow," she repeated often in the ears of the dying woman, who would reply:

"Yes, I know, I know, but some sin beyond hope, and I am one of these. All my life has been a *lie*, and I meant it should be. And now it is all thick darkness whichever way I look. I never did a genuine good thing in my life. All was for effect, except my love for *you*, Gertie; there was no motive for that. My love for you was real, and when you left me alone in England I tried once to pray, truly pray on my knees alone when nobody saw me; but something whispered, mockingly, '*You pray?*' and I did not try again. Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do, the horror is so great?"

"Jesus came to save sinners, even the chief of sinners, and He will do it; He said so, and He never told a lie," Gertie whispered, softly.

And Mrs. Barrett caught the "chief of sinners" as if she had never heard it before, and held to it, and kept repeating to herself, "The *chief* of sinners; that's I; He must have meant me, the very chiefest."

Then she would ask Gertie to pray,—that the sin might be forgiven, and *the girl* kept from harm, and without knowing at all for whom she prayed or what particular sin, Gertie did pray many times, and did her best to soothe and comfort the remorseful woman, who grew more quiet at last, and exhibited less terror of death and the world beyond.

"I may yet be saved, but it will be as by fire," she said to Gertie one day,—the seventh since the morning when Edith had been borne insensible from her room.

In her own agony of mind Mrs. Barrett had not evinced much interest in Edith's illness, nor did she know how sick she was until, when more quiet herself, she asked for her daughter, and why she did not come to see her. Then Gertie told her of the fever which was raging so high, and with the tears pouring over her withered face, Mrs. Barrett said:

"I shall never see her again; but tell her, Gertie, how bitterly I repented, and how at the last peace came, even to me. Tell her, too,—and don't forget this message, which will comfort her, perhaps,—tell her the last words she ever said to me must not make her unhappy. I deserved them. I do not blame her and she need not remember them with regret, though she will forgive me some time. Heaven has, I hope."

She was very quiet after that for the remainder of the day, and lay with her eyes shut; but several times, when Gertie looked at her to see if she was asleep, she saw her lips move, and knew that she was praying. That night was her last, for she died toward morning,—alone with Gertie, as she wished to be.

"Don't call any one, please," she said, when Gertie proposed going for Mrs. Tiffe. "I'd rather be alone with you, who have been so kind to me, and who, I am sure, like me a little."

"Yes,—I do, I do!" Gertie said, kissing the white face, on which the death-dew was standing.

And Mrs. Barrett continued :

"It is strange that you should be the one to care for me at the last, as tenderly as if you were my own grandchild. Have you a grandmother, Gertie?"

"Yes, or I had one once, though I never saw her; but Auntie Rogers said so, and told me all I ever knew of my family, which is very little. Sometimes I have strange ideas, as if I belonged to nobody, and then I try so hard to recall what it was I once overheard auntie saying to her sister in London years ago. Miss Anne Stover was at our house——"

"Stover! Stover!" Mrs. Barrett repeated, raising herself in bed and quivering in every nerve.

"Yes, she was auntie's sister, you know; and said something about somebody's being identified by a *mark*, and there's a mark on my bosom, low down——"

"A mark of what?" Mrs. Barrett asked, eagerly.

And Gertie replied:

"It is like a drop of blood."

"Blood! Did you say a drop of blood?" and Mrs. Barrett shook as with an ague chill as she fell back upon her pillow, while Gertie bent over her, and bathed her brow and lips until, rallying all her energies, she said: "Gertie, Gertie! tell Edith,—tell her! Oh, if I could live to see her myself! Gertie, my child, God bless you! I know He has forgiven me now!"

Her arms closed tightly around Gertie's neck, and held her there in a close embrace until the girl herself unclasped them, and, putting them gently down upon the bed, saw that Mrs. Barrett was dead.

And just across the hall in her own room Edith lay, now singing snatches of some lullaby to an unseen child, which she hushed in her arms, now talking of the rain upon the window-pane, the tramp upon the stairs, the roar in the streets, and again laughing deliriously at something she said, and which seemed to strike her as ridiculous. And by her Colonel Schuyler sat, with the fear of death in his heart, when Gertie came in

and told him there was really death in the next room, and asked if he had any orders to give.

"None,—no, do what you like," he answered, quickly; then glancing at the white face on the pillow, and remembering that she who lay dead beneath his roof was his young wife's mother, he rose and added: "I'll go myself and see her;" and following Gertie, he soon stood by the motionless form of her who had been his mother-in-law, and whose presence in his house had annoyed him so much.

But she would trouble him no more. All he could do for her now was to give her a burial, and for Edith's sake that burial should be as perfect in its appointments as if the dead had been his own mother, whom twenty carriages had followed out to Greenwood. There were almost as many as that drawn up before the house on Schuyler Hill on the day of the funeral, for far and near the people knew of the cloud hanging over that household; of the aged mother just arrived from England, and dead before she had even seen her daughter's handsome home; of the little grave in the cemetery, made there too soon, and of the chamber where Edith lay, raving in mad delirium, and tearing her hair until they tied her hands to keep them from further mischief. And so they came from every quarter and filled the house to overflowing, save the south wing, where Edith was; that was bolted against them, and the murmur of the gathering multitude did not penetrate there enough to awaken the slightest interest in Edith. Only a very few beside myself were permitted to see the dead woman, lying so still in the costly casket which the colonel had ordered from New York, and to us, who looked upon her, there came no suspicion that we had ever seen that face before. It was very calm and peaceful in its last sleep, and many said, "She must have been fine-looking when in health," while in every heart there was a profound pity for the stranger who had died so soon in a foreign land, and for whom there was no mourner at the grand funeral, except Gertie.

During the services the colonel left Edith long enough to come down to the parlor and listen while the prayers were said and the hymns were sung; then he went back to Edith,

and strangers did the rest, making the funeral seem so sad and lonely without a blood relation except little Arthur, whose shoulder-knots and sash were black, and whom Gertie led by the hand when she went out to the Schuyler carriage, which was to take her to the grave as first and only mourner.

"Go with me, Miss Armstrong," she whispered, as she passed me in the hall, and I followed after her until, as the carriage was reached, and she was about to enter, when I felt a sudden rush behind me, and was conscious that something unusual was agitating the crowd, and causing it to divide and fall back as if to give room for some one. It was for Godfrey, who, flushed and excited, made his way through the throng of people, and lifting Gertie from the ground as if she had been a feather's weight, put her in the carriage before she knew whose arms were encircling her in so tender, masterful a manner as if they had the right. Little Arthur was put in next, and then Godfrey followed himself, closing the door behind him, and effectually shutting me out. But I knew it was better so, and was glad he was there, a help and a comfort to Gertie. By the merest accident he had heard that morning from Tom Barton of Mrs. Barrett's death and Edith's illness, and had taken the next train for Hampstead, which he reached just in time to join the funeral procession. Nor was his coming inopportune. He had a feeling, he said, that everything would devolve on Gertie, who would need somebody to sustain her. And she did, and when recovered from the first shock of finding Godfrey beside her, caring for her so kindly, she gave way, and her head drooped for a moment on his shoulder, as she sobbed out: "Oh, Godfrey, what made you come? I am so glad, so glad."

"What for you tie, then, if you're glad?" Arthur said, looking curiously from Gertie to Godfrey, and from Godfrey back to Gertie, as if not quite sure that all was right.

"Halloo, you little shaver, who thought you could put two and two together," Godfrey said, as he took his brother in his lap and held him there until they reached the grave; then he alighted and stood with the child between himself and Gertie, while the burial service was read.

"That's my *danmusser* in the box," Arthur said, aloud, as the coffin was lowered from sight, and when the bystanders heard it more than one wept for the lonely woman, the "*danmusser*" of the little three-years-old Arthur, whose golden curls were tossed by the November wind as he stood on tiptoe leaning forward to look into the grave and throw the wreath of everlastings he had brought for this purpose.

Arthur was greatly attached to his tall brother Godfrey, and hung about him constantly after the return from the grave, and told both Mrs. Tiffe and his father that "Dirtie had tied on Godfrey's coat 'cause she was so glad *danmusser* was dead."

Godfrey had intended to return that same night if possible, but when he spoke of it before Gertie it seemed to him that her eyes pleaded with him to stay, and when he stood for a moment as he did at Edith's bedside and saw how sick she was, he felt that to leave was impossible until the balance was turned one way or the other, and he knew whether his fair young step-mother lived or died.

CHAPTER LII.

THE BATTLE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.

FROM the moment when Edith fell fainting across her mother's feet, she had never known a moment's consciousness, but had either lain like one from whom life had fled forever, or raved in wild delirium as she tossed from side to side, trying in vain to free herself from the strong arms which in mercy held her so fast. Her lost baby was her theme; but at first the colonel attached no meaning to it, thinking it but natural that her mind should dwell upon the little one dead before it was born. Still, it was strange, he thought, that she should rave about it so furiously, begging him to go and find it and rescue it from the streets, and bring it to her, so she could tell it she was not altogether to blame.

"Oh, my daughter! my lost daughter!" she would moan; "where are you now, and where have you been these many years, when I thought you dead in your little grave?"

Then she would whisper to some fancied person standing by her bed, and ask him to forgive her for the wrong done to his child, and when the colonel said to her, gently, "Edith, darling, you have not harmed our child," she would answer him:

"No,—not yours! Oh, you don't know,—you would kill me if you did! Oh, my baby! my baby, who went in the rain!"

What she meant the colonel could not guess, and he grew old and worn as he watched beside her, listening to her ravings, and trying to find some cause for them. She never mentioned her mother, and did not know when she died; but she seemed quieter that day, and while the people were at the grave she suffered her husband, for the first time since her illness, to hold her hand in his; but her lips quivered and the tears rained down her cheeks as she kept whispering: "I am so sorry, Howard,—so sorry! and I did not know it, or I would have told you."

"Sorry for what, darling? There's nothing to be sorry for," the colonel said, as he kissed her tears away and bade her try to sleep. She knew Godfrey, and as if feeling intuitively that she had a friend in him, she tried to tell him something about a child lost in the streets, whom *he* was to find and bring to her, "pure, spotless, unharmed." She laid great stress on the last words, and Godfrey promised to do her bidding if she would go to sleep and not distress herself so much.

"I will, I will. See, I'm asleep!" she said, closing her eyes tightly, and lying so still that in a few moments she *was* asleep.

When she awoke Gertie was standing near, and at sight of her a bright smile broke over Edith's face as she looked up at Godfrey, and said:

"You found her, didn't you, pure and unspotted as an angel?"

Nobody knew at all what she meant, or spoke to her as she fondled Gertie's face and hands, and asked her where she had

been so long, and how it was she was so fair and sweet, so different from the girls in the street. Then for a moment consciousness struggled to assert itself, and she seemed to know who Gertie was, and whispered to her :

"Stay with me,—I'm better when I see you."

Once before Gertie's presence had called her back from the border land of death, and now she was so much quieter with her there that Gertie never left her except for the rest which she absolutely needed. In this condition of affairs Godfrey had no chance for seeing Gertie alone, except on one occasion, when he met her for a moment in a side hall, and stopping her as she was passing him, said to her :

"Gertie, have you not changed your mind? Must your answer to me be always the same?"

"Yes, Godfrey, always the same. Go back to Alice; try to love her. You will be happier so," was Gertie's reply, and Godfrey answered :

"Never, so long as I have my senses. I will wait for you a thousand years."

He tried to kiss her hand, but she snatched it from him, and hurried away to the sick-room. The next day he returned to New York, and soon after, in a letter to her father, Julia spoke of her brother as having escorted Alice to a grand party given by the Montgomeries on Madison Avenue.

This piece of news the colonel managed to convey to Gertie, who felt a pain in her heart as she guessed what the end would probably be. Edith was better now. The fearful paroxysms had ceased, and she lay very quiet and still, seldom speaking to any one, but shuddering and manifesting actual distress when her husband came to her with words and acts of tenderness.

"Don't, please; I can't bear it," she said to him once, when he brought a bouquet and laid it upon her pillow.

He thought the perfume offended her, and took the flowers away; then, sitting down beside her, told her how glad he was that she was better, and how desolate the house seemed without her.

For a moment she listened to him while every muscle in her

face worked painfully ; then, bursting into tears, she put up both her hands to hide her face, and cried :

"Don't, Howard, you break my heart. Oh, Howard, my husband, pity me, but don't make it harder with words of love. Go away, please, and do not come again till I send for you ; then you will want to go."

He felt hurt and wounded, but did as she bade him, and left her with Gertie ; nor did he see her again for one whole week, except when she was asleep, and could not be disturbed by his presence. Then he would go in, and bending over her kiss her face softly, and smooth the golden brown hair, and calling her his poor darling leave behind some little token to show that he had been there.

At last Edith asked for her mother suddenly, and in a way which admitted of no prevarication, and Gertie told her everything, as carefully as possible.

"Colonel Schuyler bade us do whatever we thought you would like to have done, and he ordered the casket from New York, and was down stairs during the services," Gertie said, and then Edith's heart seemed bursting with a storm of sobs and piteous cries, which Gertie could not understand.

"Oh, my husband, my noble husband, what will he say ? what will he say ?" she murmured to herself, while Gertie stood looking at her.

At last she grew quiet, and turning to Gertie, said :

"Now tell me how mother died, and who was with her, and what she said."

And Gertie told her what had passed in the chamber of death, of the terrible remorse for something which was evidently weighing on Mrs. Barrett's mind, the bitter repentance, the peace which came at last, and the message left for Mrs. Schuyler.

"She was very particular about that," Gertie said ; "for she thought you might be unhappy, perhaps, if you did not know it, and she said you would forgive her some time."

"I may, I'll try. I hope I do, but it is very hard," Edith replied, and then for an hour or more she lay with her eyes closed,

though she was not asleep, and when at last she opened them she asked where her husband was, and expressed a wish to see him.

Gertie told her that as she was so much better and did not need him constantly, he had gone to New York for two or three days, she believed.

"His going was very sudden," she said, "and I knew nothing of it till just before he went, when he came to me and said it was necessary, and if you asked for him I was to tell you he would be back soon. I should not be surprised if he came to-night."

Instead of manifesting any disappointment Edith seemed relieved at her husband's absence, as if it gave her a longer respite ; but she little dreamed why he had gone, or of the fearful storm of anguish through which he had passed, and which left its marks upon him so plainly, that when at the close of the third day he came back, Gertie, who met him first in the hall, started in surprise, and asked what was the matter.

"Nothing, only tired ; how is Mrs. Schuyler ?" he said, and his voice sounded husky and unnatural, while it seemed to Gertie as if he stooped and tottered like an old man as he went slowly up the stairs, holding to the banisters and pausing once as if to rest.

He did not go straight to Edith's room, but into his library, and Gertie took him some biscuits and a glass of wine, for she was frightened at his weakness and exhaustion. He thanked her for her thoughtfulness, and said, with a sickly kind of smile :

"I think I do need something. I have scarcely tasted food since I left home. How many days ago is that, Gertie ?"

His manner was strange, and Gertie stayed with him and made him drink the wine, and eat a cracker, and then watched him curiously as he went down the hall to Edith's room, which he entered and shut the door.

CHAPTER LIII.

COLONEL SCHUYLER AND THE SECRET.

HE knew it now in part, and the knowledge of it had aged him as ten years of ordinary life could not have done, making him feel old and worn and bewildered, and uncertain whether it really were himself upon whom this blow had fallen. And it had come to him thus: Mrs. Barrett had brought her grandson a fanciful whistle, of which he was very fond, and which, since Edith's illness, could not be found.

"I wants my fiddle danmusser brought me," Arthur said to his father, who was amusing him in the nursery one day, the fourth after Edith had banished him from her room and bidden him stay away until she sent for him.

"I wants my *fiddle*," the child kept saying, and then the search for it commenced again, and Mary, the nurse, suddenly remembered having seen it last on the day when her mistress was taken sick. "She had Arthur in her lap, and might have put it in her pocket. She sometimes did so," she said.

"What dress did she have on?" the colonel asked, and on being told went himself to the closet where the cashmere wrapper was hanging. The missing toy was there, and also the letter, which he drew out with the whistle and held a moment in his hand, wondering what it contained, and why it had never reached him.

"Col. Howard Schuyler, Oakwood," was the direction in Edith's handwriting, and by that he knew that it was written years ago when he was in England, and his wonder increased as to the cause of its having been so long withheld and not destroyed.

Had Edith written it, intending to send it to him, and then changed her mind, and if so, why? he asked himself as he stood turning it over in his hand, and then there flashed upon him a remembrance of the time when she said he did not know *all* about that early love affair of hers, and he felt convinced that

the *all* was contained in that soiled, yellow letter. And if so, should he read it? Ought he to read it? he questioned, as, having given the toy to Arthur, he went to his own private room to be alone and think. Never since Edith came to Hampstead had there been the slightest allusion to that *affaire du cœur* to which she had seemed to attach so much importance, and he had not the least idea *who* the young man was or where he had lived and died. Possibly it was all here in the letter, which he laid down and took up again three times before deciding to read it. And when at last he did open it and glanced at the heading, "Caledonia St., June 20th, 18—. Col. Howard Schuyler: Dear Sir," he would not for a moment let his eye go any further, but held it fast on the "Dear Sir," while he pondered again his right to read the letter. Then his eye wandered a little and caught a word here and there, and lighted at last on the names "Abelard Lyle" and "Rev. Mr. Calvert," and *then* he began at the beginning and read every word twice, to be sure there was no mistake, while his heart seemed to stop beating, and he tore off both cravat and collar in order to breathe more freely. There was a humming in his ears, and he could not hear the December storm beating against the windows, and there was a mist before his eyes, so that he could not see the paper he held in his trembling hand. Nor was vision longer needful to him. He had read and re-read, and the lines had burned themselves into his brain word for word, and even with his eyes shut he could see the sentence, "*Abelard Lyle, your hired workman, was my husband, and I was Heloise Fordham, who lived in the cottage by the bridge at Hampstead.*"

"*Abelard Lyle her husband!*" he tried to say, but his lips only gave a sound which made him shiver and wonder if he was dying, it was so unnatural, so like the cry of an animal wounded and in mortal agony.

And he was wounded, sorely, and every nerve quivered with pain, and he could feel the hot blood surging through his veins as he had felt it once when under the influence of ether. Then he had fought and struck at the dentist operating on him, and acted like a madman. But he did not do so

now. He neither fought nor struck, but sat motionless, thinking of the words, "Abelard Lyle was my husband, and I was Heloise Fordham."

He remembered that young girl, remembered the face framed in the green leaves, and the clear voice telling him Abelard's name and place of birth. He remembered, too, that people had said the young man was her lover, and how, suddenly she disappeared with her mother. And Edith, his Edith, the woman he loved so much, was *that girl*!—was Abelard's wife, and the mother of his child, and had married him without telling him a word of the real truth as written in this letter! There had been a show of sincerity, and that was all. She had at first meant to tell him, but had changed her mind and given him no hint of the actual state of things. She had really come to him stained with falsehood and treachery and deceit, a lie on her lips, a lie in her heart, and a lie in every act of hers, since her beautiful head was first pillowed on his bosom.

Oh, what bitter things he thought against her in the first moments of surprise and anguish! How black the record was, and how he shrank from ever looking in her face again, as he thought of the imposition practised upon him.

"Oh, Edith! Edith! I loved you so much, and thought you so innocent and pure. I can never trust you again, or take you for my wife," he said, when his lips could frame his thoughts into words, and his heart was hardening like adamant against the woman who had so deceived him, when the door was pushed cautiously open, and little Arthur came in, blowing his whistle vigorously at first, and then staring wonderingly at his father's white, haggard face.

"What is it, papa?" he said. "Is you sick, too, like mam-ma?" and the mother looked through her boy's eyes straight at the suffering husband, who recognized the look, and clasping his child and Edith's in his arms, sobbed and wept over him just as he would have done had Edith really been dead and Arthur motherless. "Is you tyin' for mam-ma? Don't; she'll det well. Dirtie and the doctor will ture her. Is you tyin' for her?" As

thur said; and with sobs which rent his very heart, Colonel Schuyler answered :

"Yes, Arthur, I'm crying for her,—for her,—your mother Oh, Edith ! my lost Edith !"

His tears poured in torrents now, and did him good, for the pressure around his heart gave way, the blood flowed more slowly through his veins, and the humming ceased in his ears, as he strained Arthur to his bosom and covered him with the kisses he meant as a farewell to the mother. He could never touch her false lips again, but he could kiss her child, and he fondled and wept over him, and then bidding him go away, and locking the door upon him, went back to the battle he was fighting between justice and inclination.

What should he do ? What ought he to do ? Should he show the letter to Edith, and, upbraiding her with her duplicity, live henceforth apart from her, as one he never could trust again ? or should he keep his knowledge to himself, and try to act as if nothing had happened, hoping that some time she would herself tell him the truth, and why it had so long been withheld ?

He could not decide then ; he was in no condition to think clearly of anything, except that his Edith, whom he had taken for a pure, innocent young maiden, had been a wife and mother, and never let him know it. What her motives had been he could readily guess. She wanted his money and name, and the position he could give her, and if she told him all she feared the result. This was the reason, he said, and yet when he remembered many things in the past, he could not reconcile the two, or reason clearly about anything.

"I must go away by myself and think it out alone," he thought, and glancing at his watch, and seeing there was yet time for the down train to New York, he rose, and going to the door of Edith's room, knocked softly, and asked Gertie to come out a moment to him.

"I am going away for a day or two, or three at the most," he said. "Mrs. Schuyler is out of danger, and as in her present state she is more quiet without me I shall not be needed for a

little time, and leave her in your care. I know I can trust you in everything. You have been faithful to us, Gertie!"

He wrung her hand as he said this, feeling for the moment as if of all his family Gertie alone had not forsaken him. Emily was dead, Emma was over the sea, Godfrey was estranged, Julia was seeking her own pleasure with a party of friends in Florida, and Edith, oh, how far she had drifted away from him within the last two hours,—so far that he feared she could never come back again, just as she was before. And yet he loved her so much, and when he caught through the open door a glimpse of her white face upon the pillow, he experienced a keen throb of pain, and felt an almost irresistible desire to go to her and beg her to tell him that what he had just read was false, that she was nought to Abelard Lyle, nought to that woman in Alnwick, the very thought of whom made him shudder with disgust. But there could be no doubt. He had it in her handwriting, and with a stifled moan he walked through the hall, and down the stairs out into the yard, where he ordered his man to take him to the train.

There were none of his acquaintances going down at that time of the day, and choosing a seat near the door behind his fellow-passengers, he sat with his coat-collar turned up, and his hat over his eyes, apparently asleep, though never was sleep further from one's eyes than from his, as he mentally went over with the story told in Edith's letter and tried to realize it. Arrived in New York he went to the St. Nicholas, feeling that he should be more secure there, as Godfrey and his friends frequented the hotels farther up town. He wanted as private a room as possible, he said, with his meals served in it, and no one to intrude; so they gave him one far up on the fourth floor, and there for three days he stayed, never once leaving the hotel, or taking other exercise than to walk up and down his room, and this he did for hours at a time, with his hands behind him, and his head bent forward, while he tried "to think it out." He did not sleep, and the chamber-maid found his bed unruffled morning after morning, when she came to arrange his room, and his food was taken away untouched unless it were

a bit of toast and a cup of coffee, which he compelled himself to swallow on the morning of the third day, when he felt his strength giving way, and knew he must take something. He had thought it all over and over again, and gone through with every incident of Edith's life as narrated in her letter, and was as far from any decision as ever.

"If she had told me,—if I had known," he kept repeating to himself, without finishing the sentence, for he did not know what the result might have been if he had known that the woman he thought to make his wife was the widow of his hired workman, the sister-in-law of Jenny Nesbit, among the Alnwick Hills. "If I had loved her then as I do now, it would have made no difference," he said to himself at last, "and in any event I should have respected her for a truthful, conscientious woman, which I cannot do now. Oh, Edith, Edith, how you have fallen, and I thought you so true!"

This was the third day when he sat exhausted by the table where the letter lay. He kept it there constantly in his sight, though he had not read it since he came, but he took it up now and turning to the first page began to read it again, when, on the margin in the lower corner his eye caught, for the first time, a few faint pencil marks, almost erased, but which could still be made out with care. It was not Edith's handwriting, and in looking closely he recognized the peculiar style of Mrs. Barrett, whose writing he had seen on the back of Edith's letters received from her. What had she written there,—she who, at her daughter's instigation, had lied so foully to him on the day when she came with that smooth story of an *early love* and nothing more! He asked himself this question, and as he asked it, there flashed over him a light of revelation even before he made out the pencil lines.

LONDON, *October 10th, 18—.*

"This letter Edith bade me carry to Col. Schuyler, but I kept it back and told him what I liked, and she never knew of the deception until just after she was married, when I accidentally let it out, and she fainted away.

"M. BARRETT."

The words were finely written, but the colonel made them out, while the sudden revulsion from despair to joy was almost too much for him, and he sat for a moment half fainting in his chair. Then he roused himself, and his first words were :

“Thank God ! I have my Edith back again !”

It must have been in some moment of contrition that Mrs. Barrett had penned the words with which from her grave she now spoke for her injured daughter. Something, sure, had prompted her to keep the letter and write the explanation which brought such joy to Col. Schuyler. The losing faith in Edith's integrity, the belief that she was artful, intriguing, and deceitful, had hurt him a thousandfold more than the humiliation of having married the widow of Abelard Lyle. He had hardly given that a serious thought, so great was his disappointment at having found Edith false as he believed ; and when she was proved otherwise his joy was as acute as his grief had been intense. Every circumstance which bore at all upon the matter came back to him, and he remembered so distinctly the many times since their marriage when Edith had tried to tell him. At the inn where they stopped on their bridal night she had stolen to his side, with the confession on her lips, and he had not listened to her, but had bidden her never allude to the past again, as he was satisfied. Dear Edith, he said, aloud, and felt again the pressure of her hand on his shoulder where she had lain it, and heard the falter in her voice as she first called him Howard. How she must have suffered then and afterward when he insisted upon taking her with him to the Lyles. He knew now the secret of her silence, which he had called pride. The iron fingers were on her throat, and she could not talk in Abelard's home with that dreadful Jenny sitting there. And *she* was Edith's sister-in-law ! The colonel shivered from head to foot when he remembered that, and a flush of shame and mortification spread over his pale face. He had yet to fight these feelings down, and he did it manfully, and said to himself again and again :

“I love her just as well, now that I know she did not mean to deceive me, just as well as if she had never seen those Lyles,

who seem thrust upon me at every point, first through Emma and then through Edith, my wife."

He liked to say "my wife," and kept repeating the name as if it would make her dearer to him, and wipe out every feeling of regret for the incidents of her early life. How she has suffered, he thought, as he remembered all she must have passed through after her arrival at Hampstead, and he could understand now the meaning of her strange words when their first baby was born, and when it died. She was thinking of the little girl whose grave she never saw, and in the transports of his joy and generosity the poor man thought how he would, if she wished it, help her find that grave, and place a headstone there to the memory of little Heloise Lyle! Nobody would ever connect that name with him or his, and he was glad of that, and was not sorry that the little girl was dead, and could not by any chance come up as a witness against his Edith. Alas, he never dreamed that only half the strange story had been told, that his love and generosity, and principle of right and wrong were to be more severely tested than they yet had been. He was human, and naturally it was a comfort to him to think that Edith's story need be known only to her and to himself. It should be their secret, and die with them when they died, and the world never be the wiser for it.

That the secret had something to do with Edith's recent dangerous illness, he was certain, when he recalled expressions and ravings which had puzzled him so much; and he knew, too, or thought he did, why she shrank from him as she always did when delirious, telling him she was unworthy to let him touch her. But this should be so no longer; he would go home to her at once, and as soon as she could bear it, tell her that he knew the whole, and loved her the same as ever.

He did not stop long after that, but calling for his bill, hurried to the station and was soon on his way to Schuyler P. L.

CHAPTER LIV.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

HE found his wife asleep, with her cheek resting on one hand, her hair pushed back and lying in masses upon the pillow. He had seen her thus many times, and he paused to look at her now, and thought how fair and lovely she was even yet, with her thirty-four years and the marks of her dangerous illness. Hers was a face which does not grow old, and to him it seemed more beautiful than it had been on her bridal day, because he loved her more than he did then, and knew how sweet she was. He did not associate her in the least with Abelard Lyle when he was with her. It was some other Edith who had been the heroine of that strange romance,—it was Heloise Fordham, the girl at the cottage, who had shed such bitter tears for the young carpenter, and not his wife, lying there before him in that quiet sleep. She was Edith,—the mother of his little boy, and he stooped at last and kissed her just as tenderly as if that letter had never been read by him, and he had never heard of the Lyles who lived in Alnwick.

The kiss roused her a little, and turning upon her pillow, her lips moved, and he heard her say, "Abelard," while a pang, keener, sharper, and different from anything he had known, shot through his heart and brought great drops of sweat to his brow and lips.

During the dreadful three days when he was "thinking it out" he had experienced no jealousy of the dead youth, or for an instant believed that Edith loved him still, or could have loved him had he lived till now and met her for the first time in the fulness of her womanhood. But she was dreaming of him sure, and Colonel Schuyler would have given much to know the nature of the dream.

She was sleeping again, and he drew a chair beside her, and with his eyes fastened upon her face, sat looking at her until he heard Gertie light the gas in the adjoining room, preparatory to

putting Arthur to bed. This was something the child would allow no one else to do, and now, when this was done, he insisted upon "tissin' mam-ma just once" before going to his crib.

"Yes, Gertie, let him come," the colonel said, as he heard the clamor at the door, and in his long night-gown the boy came in, screaming with joy at sight of his father, and crying out, as he reached out his arms to touch his mother's face :

"Oh, mamma! mamma! papa's tome! I'se so glad!—is you?"

Edith was awake now, and started when she saw the dark figure and guessed whose it was.

"Papa's tome!" Arthur said again, while Gertie, feeling sure that Mrs. Schuyler would be disturbed, carried him forcibly away, and left the husband and wife alone.

Then Colonel Schuyler arose, and bending over his wife, said softly :

"Edith, darling, I have come home. Are you glad to see me?" He did not wait for her to answer, but continued : "They tell me you are better, and I am so rejoiced. Kiss me, can you?"

She kissed him as he desired, and he felt her hot tears on his cheek as he held his face to her. She was much better than when he left her. Reason had come back again, and she could think of all that was past, and what lay before her, and she shrank from it, and from her husband, who must soon know everything, and who might turn from her in bitter scorn and disgust. Oh, how she loved him now! and how her poor heart ached when she thought of losing his respect and seeing his love for her turning into hatred. For he did love her; she was sure of that, and never had his manner been so full of manly tenderness as it was when he came to her after an absence of three days and asked her if she was glad. It seemed almost, she thought, as if he were pitying her, and he was, and wishing he could help her tell him what he was certain she wanted to. But it must not be that night; she was too weak to bear the excitement. He must wait till she was stronger, he thought, and when at last, as

he supported her in his arms and stroked her face caressingly, she said to him :

"Now, Howard, please lay me down, and do not come again till I send for you ;" he went away, but did not stay till she sent for him, lest it should be too long. Every day he went to see her, and tried to seem natural, and once, when she asked why he looked so thin and haggard, he answered evasively and said he had a cold, and then went straight to the cemetery, and, standing at Abelard's grave, read the inscription aloud :

"James A. Lyle. Born in Alnwick, England. Died June 18th, 18—. Aged 23."

Then he examined the stone and tried if it were firm in its place, and kicked the snow and dead leaves from a tuft of daisies, which looked so fresh and green that he stooped to examine it, and found to his surprise a tiny white blossom hidden under the snow and the pile of leaves and straw which Gertie had put there in the fall to protect the plants.

"Daisies under the snow on *his* grave. It is very remarkable," he said, as he picked the little flower, and going back to the house he put it in some water, and set it on the table in his room, where he watched it all day long until it grew to be almost a phantom and he felt he could endure it no longer.

He must speak to Edith or go mad himself. She was much better now, and he would watch with her that night, and have it out when there was no fear of interruption. But he did not tell her of his intention lest she should oppose it, and she supposed her attendant was to be Gertie, who frequently slept in the room with her.

Edith's habit was to sleep from nine to twelve, but this night it was nearly one when she awoke and looked about her. The gas was turned down and the bright winter moonlight came through the window and fell in a sheet upon the floor, making the room almost as light as day, and showing plainly the figure sitting so motionless in the chair at the foot of the bed. It was not Gertie, and Edith's heart beat quickly when she saw it was her husband, and thought :

"I must tell him,—I am able to bear it now."

He knew she was awake, but waited for her to speak, trembling in every joint as he wondered how he should begin to say that which he was there to say, and wondering, too, how she would receive it. He had the little daisy on the table near him, and when she stirred he took it in his hand and fancied that it had grown to be the size of the magnolia blossoms he saw once in the gardens at the South. His mind was surely getting disordered, when Edith spoke and said :

"Howard, is that you? Are you watching with me?"

"Yes, Edith;" and he drew his chair closer to her, while she went on :

"Howard, do you love me, really, truly love me?"

"Yes," he answered, "I really, truly love you. Why do you ask me, Edith?"

"Because, Howard, because I,—I,—wanted to be sure. I've,—there is something I must; oh, Howard, you do,—love me,—you do."

It was a piteous cry, and had she been convicted of murder Colonel Schuyler would have stood by her with that sound in his ears. She was going to tell him, instead of his telling her! He was sure of it, and in his anxiety to know how she would begin, he resolved not to help her at first, but hear what she had to say. For a moment she lay very still, with her hands locked tightly together, and he knew that she was praying, for he caught the words "Help me," as they came from her white lips. And heaven did help her, and the iron fingers were held back and her respiration was unimpeded, save by strong emotion, when she at last began :

"Howard, do you remember the day when we were married, and I fainted in my dressing-room before going to the train?"

It was coming now, sure, and he replied :

"Yes, Edith, I remember it; your mother said it was in some way connected with that *affaire du cœur*."

"Yes, Howard, it was. Hold my hand, please, and hold it tight; till you feel your love for me going away."

He took her hand and held it fast, while she continued :

"And do you remember the little inn, and the pleasant night,

and the perfume of the flowers in the yard and the fresh hay on the lawn, and you sitting on the balcony when I came to tell you something, which you refused to hear?"

"Yes, Edith, I remember it. Does one forget his wedding day so easily that I should forget that," he said; and Edith went on:

"You asked me to call you Howard, and I said, wait till I have told you what might make a difference, but you would not listen. You were satisfied, you said, and if there was anything more you did not wish to hear it, and you promised that whatever came in the future you would have faith in me and believe I meant to do right. Howard, there *was* something more, a terrible something, and I must tell it to you now, but draw the curtain, please; shut out the moonlight and turn off the gas. I'd rather be in the dark, and not see your face, when your love begins to turn to hate."

It would be cruel to let her go further. He had heard enough to satisfy him that a full confession was to be made, and without dropping the curtain or turning the gas lower he leaned over her, and said:

"One question, Edith, please; do you love me now better than you did on our wedding day? Is there no regret in your heart for that early lover? Tell me truly, Edith."

"No, not the way you mean. Regret there is, it is true, but not that way. The love I had for him has been overshadowed by a later and mightier love; and, I can truly say, few wives have ever loved their husbands as I love you, and that makes it so hard to tell you now when I want your love so much. Oh, Howard, just once, for the sake of all the happiness we have had together, kiss me and hold me in your arms as you *used* to do. You'll never hold me so again, but this once do not refuse."

He wound his arms around her and pressed her closely to him, and kissed her brow and lips, and she felt his tears upon her face when at last he released her and put her gently back upon the pillow.

"Thank you, Howard. I'll never ask you again," she said,

for she believed it their farewell ; but he knew it was not, and when she was recovered a little he summoned all his energies, and said :

“ Edith, you seem to be afraid that what you have to tell me will make me love you less. I promise you that it shall not, and in token of that promise I have brought you this daisy which I found blossoming under the snow on Abelard's grave, as if it were a message from him to mediate between us.”

He spoke slowly and held up the little white blossom before the eyes which looked at it and him so wonderingly.

“ What do you mean ? ” Edith asked, faintly, and he replied :

“ I mean that you have no need to tell the story, for I know it all ! ”

There was a sudden gasping for breath, a throwing back of the bedclothes as if their weight oppressed her, and then Edith asked :

“ What do you know ? ”

“ I know that you were once Heloise Fordham, and lived in the cottage by the bridge, and were the wife of Abelard Lyle, and had a little daughter born in London, whom your mother carried away when you were insensible, and that you wrote all this in a letter to me before we were married, and supposed I got that letter until our wedding day, when you learned how we had both been deceived, and you tried so hard to tell me. You see I *do* know it all,” he continued. “ I accidentally found your letter in the pocket where you put it with Arthur's whistle. It was directed to me and I read it, and in my first surprise and bewilderment went away to be alone and think it out. I did think it out, and exonerated you entirely, and have come back to tell you so and assure you of my continued love and respect. Poor darling, how much you must have suffered, but it is all over now. Your secret is known to me, and that is all that is necessary. It shall die——”

He stopped short, struck by the look of pain and anguish on Edith's face, and the low moan which escaped her as she drew herself away from him to the far side of the bed. He did not

know then that her child still lived; he could not, for it was not thus written in her letter, and throwing up her hands, she cried :

“Oh, Howard, Howard, you do not know the whole, neither did I till mother came and told me. She went to the hospital after baby, as I said in my letter, and when she came back she told me baby was dead, and I believed her, nor ever had another thought until the night I was with her and you found me fainting at her feet. She could not die with that lie on her soul, and she told me the truth at last. Baby was not dead. She was adopted,—taken by some poor woman who lived in Dorset Street,—the number is in that letter or on the envelope somewhere, and the name Stover. Howard, my daughter is alive, and now you know the whole.”

He did not speak, though he shivered from head to foot as there came over him a dim foreshadowing of what Edith meant to do and what he must not prevent her doing. He saw the right as clearly as she did, and knew that were he in her place he should do the same; but the flesh was very weak, and he staggered, and grew faint and sick as he thought of letting the whole world know who his Edith was, and how he had been deceived. If the child was found and acknowledged all this must be, unless indeed they both might think it best to keep it still a secret. They could care for the girl just the same, adopt her, perhaps, and never let her nor any one know just what she was to them. Edith certainly would concede so much to his feelings. She would not thrust this great humiliation upon him in the face of all the world. And if they never found the girl,—but he dared not allow himself to consider that possibility for a moment. Something told him they would find her, and he caught himself wondering how she looked, if she was at all like her mother; or had she lived so long with the people in Dorset Street that every vestige of grace and beauty and refinement had been destroyed, and she was like her aunt, Jenny Nesbit, in far-off Alnwick, with her bare arms and dreadful slang. How he dreaded her, and how his heart beat with shame at the thought of bringing her there as an associate for his wife and

Gertie! Oh, if she could prove to be like Gertie, he thought; but she would not, and never in all his life had he shrunk from a living thing as he shrunk from that unknown step-daughter of whose existence he had never dreamed until within the last few minutes.

"Howard!" Edith said at last, but he did not answer. "Howard," she said again, "now that you know the whole you will love me still?"

"Yes, Edith," he said; and she continued, "And you will help me find her just as soon as I am able to cross the sea. Will it be in a week, do you think, or two? I am a great deal better than I was yesterday, and now that you know it I shall get well so fast. Do you think we can start in a week?"

"No, Edith, I know you cannot. A sea voyage in the winter is always rough, and you could not bear it yet," was his reply, and Edith assented, and thought how hard she would try to get well so as to go on that strange errand of hunting up a child lost almost nineteen years.

Anon there crept into her mind a suspicion of what it would be to her husband to have the story known, and she said to him pityingly:

"Howard, I am sorry for you. It will be so hard for you to have the people know."

"Yes, Edith, very hard at first; but you surely need not say anything until you know whether you find her," the colonel replied, and Edith acquiesced, and longed for the time when she should be able to endure the excitement and fatigue of the voyage and the search, and the finding perhaps of the object sought.

She was very tired and did not talk any more that night, but fell into a quiet sleep, while her husband sat by her, feeling as if he would never sleep again, or know a moment's gladness. How old and tired and worn he looked the next day, and how he stooped in walking, as if the burden were greater than he could bear. Sometimes he thought it was, and once the tempter whispered that the cold river just in sight from his window would be a better place than his beautiful home after all was

known. But Col. Schuyler was too brave a man to die a suicidal death in order to escape a trouble. "Better live and face it," he thought, and then began to feel a restless impatience to have the matter settled, to know the worst as soon as possible, and he was almost as glad as Edith when she was pronounced able to undertake the voyage. Why they were going to England in the winter they did not say, and we naturally supposed it might be to benefit Edith and pay a visit to Glenthorpe, where Emma was so happy. Norah was not going; Edith could get a maid across the water, she said, and she preferred leaving Norah to look after little Arthur. To Gertie, however, the principal care of the child was given, and she promised to be faithful to her trust, and care for the little boy as if he were her brother.

And so one day in January, when the Oceanic sailed out of the harbor of New York, Edith was in the ship going blindfolded to seek the very blessing which, all unknown, she left behind.

CHAPTER LV.

THE SEARCH IN LONDON.

THEY went first to the — St. Hospital, where officers and nurses and matron had all been changed since the night when the child Heloise was left at the door. But the books remained, and after a long time they found the one bearing date nineteen years back. Oh, how eagerly Edith turned the worn, yellow leaves till she came to the date she remembered so well.

"January —, 18—. Was received into the house a female child, found in a basket on the doorstep with the name Heloise pinned upon its dress."

That was the one, and Edith's voice trembled so much that she could not speak distinctly, as she asked of the person in attendance:

"Where is this child now? Who took her from here?— and when?"

Mrs. Simmons, the matron, could not tell. She had herself been there little more than a year, but a careful searching of the books brought to light the fact that not long after the night when the baby Heloise was found on the steps, it had been taken away by a *Mrs. Stover*, whose daughter Anne was a nurse in the Hospital at the time, and who lived at No. — Dorset Street. This agreed with the story as told by Mrs. Barrett, and thus far all seemed perfectly plain and easy to the excited woman, whom Colonel Schuyler followed mechanically where-soever she went. She was taking the lead, not he, but he submitted with a good grace, and went without a word to No — Dorset Street. It was up two flights of broken, creaking, dirty stairs, and Edith shuddered as she thought how the feet of her own child had probably been up and down this dark stairway, while she, the mother, had lived in luxury and ease.

No. — was a dirty, wretched apartment, reeking with filth, swarming with children, and smelling of onions and boiled cabbage, and that odor peculiar to rooms where the people sleep and cook and eat and live, and seldom wash themselves. The family were Germans, who could not speak a word of English, and stared wonderingly at the beautiful lady, who succeeded in making herself understood. But she might as well have talked to blocks of wood for aught they knew of any tenants there before them. She managed, however, to make out that on the floor above was an old woman, who had occupied the same room for many years, and to her Edith went next, feeling when she stood in the neat, homelike, though humble apartment of Mrs. Myers as if she had stepped into paradise. Mrs. Myers was very old, and had lived there thirty years, and remembered the Stovers, who occupied the floor below.

"Tidy, clever people, and not at all like the 'orrid Dutch cattle there now," she said. "There was old Marm Stover, and her two gals Hanny and Mary. Han worked in some 'orspital, and Mary for some grand lady in the country."

"Was there ever a child living with them,—a little girl with blue eyes and golden hair?" Edith asked.

And the woman replied :

"There was, mem, and a deal of gossip it made about the girls, though folks mostly laid it to Han, but I never b'lieved a word on't. It was took from the 'orspital, they said, and had a curis name,—Eloise,—and Mary claimed it as 'ern; and when old Marm Stover died with the cholera, Mary, who was out to service, took the child away, and I've never seen her sense, 'r 'earn tell of her. Was the child anything to you, mem?"

"Yes, everything,—it was *mine*," Edith said, impetuously, while her husband, who did not care to have her quite so outspoken, even to this old woman, said, as he took her hand to lead her away :

"Yes, yes,—thank you, Mrs. Myers; this lady has been sick, and we,—yes, we are both anxious to find some trace of the child lost so long ago: but I think it doubtful if we do,—yes, very doubtful. Come, Edith, we may as well go."

But Edith did not move. She must know something more, and she said :

"Have you no idea where this Mary Stover lived? Had she no friends who could tell me about her?"

"None as I knows on. I ain't seen or 'earn of her better'n eighteen year. Mebbe the perlice could worrit her out for you."

Edith had not thought of that, and hurried her husband into the street, and insisted upon going at once to the head of the police.

But the colonel demurred. If they could proceed quietly, he would rather do so, he said, and they would not call in the aid of the police until they had exhausted every means in their power.

And they did exhaust every means; they inquired everywhere, and hunted up every family of Stovers in the city, and went to the hospital again, and went to Mrs. Myers to see if she could not think of something forgotten when they were there before. But all was of no avail. Nobody had ever heard of Mary Stover, and Edith's heart was heavy as lead when at last the case was given to the police, who had little hope of success.

Worn out, disappointed, and discouraged, Edith took her bed

at the hotel where they were stopping, while the colonel, who was not so very much aggrieved at the failure of the search, thought to please and interest her by making some inquiries with regard to *Gertie Westbrooke*, about whose antecedents there was so much doubt and mystery. To trace her history seemed far easier than to trace the mythical Mary Stover, and he went first to the company where her annuity was payable. In answer to his inquiries as to whether they could give him any information with regard to the family, he was told that quite recently a Mrs. William Westbrooke had done some business with them in the way of a deposit. She was a widow, they said, and had come from Florence, where she had lived for many years. It was the same name, possibly the same family,—he could inquire ; they could give him the lady's address.

This he reported to Edith, who roused herself to some interest in the matter after being assured that no parent or guardian could take Gertie from them after all these years.

"If I thought they could I would not try to find them, for I can't give Gertie up," she said ; while her husband felt that *he* would be almost as loath to part with Gertie as Edith herself.

And so with more real interest now than he had felt when searching for Mary Stover, he drove with Edith one day to the handsome lodgings occupied by Mrs. William Westbrooke, recently from Florence. She was a little, pale, sandy-haired woman, of forty or thereabouts, very much dressed, and having in her manner something haughty and supercilious as she received the strangers, and, without requesting them to be seated, asked what she could do for them.

It was the colonel who did the talking this time, while Edith listened in a preoccupied kind of way, which, nevertheless, did not prevent her from hearing all that was said.

"We are Americans," the colonel began, "and we have a young girl in our family of whose antecedents we would learn something. As you have the same name, and bank at the same firm where her annuity of forty pounds a year is paid, it occurred to me to inquire if you have ever heard of a girl called Gertie, or Gertrude Westbrooke, nineteen or twenty years old."

"Gertie!—Gertrude!" Mrs. Westbrooke said. "I did know a child by that name years ago; but tell me, please, how she came to be in America living with you?"

It was Edith who talked now, and who told rapidly all she knew of Gertie Westbrooke and her so-called mother, Mrs. Rogers.

"Is it the same? Do you think it the same?" she asked; and Mrs. Westbrooke replied:

"I think it the same; yes."

"Who is she then? Are *you* her step-mother?" Edith asked; and, with a frown on her wizened little face, the lady replied:

"No, she is nothing to me. She was adopted by my husband's first wife just after the loss of her baby, and, as I understood, at the instigation of her nurse, who must have been this Mrs. Rogers. The first Mrs. Westbrooke was greatly attached to the child, and when she died she settled upon it forty pounds a year, and gave it expressly to the care of her maid.

"About a year after her death Mr. Westbrooke married me, and took me to his home in London. I did not like children, and this one was in my way, and as my husband did not care for it either, we gave it at last to the nurse, who took it to keep for her own. My first child was born soon after, and the next year we went to Florence, where my husband died, and where I have lived until within the last few months. Of Gertie I have never heard since. I was told that the nurse, Mary, was married and living comfortably; but from what you say I have no doubt that the young lady in question is the girl, and am glad she has fallen into so good hands. She was very pretty, with great blue eyes and bright auburn hair——"

"What was the name of the nurse?" Edith asked, and the lady replied:

"I don't remember whom she married, but dare say it was Rogers. My housekeeper will know; she saw her married. Her maiden name was Stover,—*Mary Stover*."

"*Mary Stover!*" and Edith started to her feet as quickly as if a heavy blow had smitten her. "Mary Stover,—tell me if you know where the child came from at first, who were her parents, and how came Mrs. Westbrooke by her?"

"I do not know as she had any parents, unless it were Mary Stover herself. I always suspected her of being the real mother, she was so attached to the child and so mysterious about it. She brought it to Mrs. Westbrooke from some Foundling Hospital, I believe, where her sister Anne was nurse."

"Oh, Gertie, Gertie, thank Heaven," Edith gasped, and the next moment she lay at her husband's feet with a face as white and rigid and still as are the faces of the dead!

There was great excitement then in Mrs. Westbrooke's rooms, ringing of bells, gathering of servants, and hurrying for physicians, three of whom came together and concurred in pronouncing it nothing worse than a fainting fit, from which the lady would soon recover.

"Shall I order a room for her here?" Mrs. Westbrooke asked, anxious to relieve herself as soon as possible from her rather troublesome guests.

The colonel, who knew Edith would be happier in their own apartments at the hotel, declined Mrs. Westbrooke's offer, and as soon as consciousness returned took his wife in his arms, and, carrying her to the carriage waiting for them, was driven back to his hotel, where he laid her upon the couch, and then sat down beside her, waiting for her to speak.

For a moment, however, she could not, and she lay perfectly still with the light of a great and unutterable happiness shining in her eyes and illuminating every feature.

"Edith, darling, you are very glad?" the colonel asked at last.

"Yes, Howard, so glad, oh, so glad," Edith replied. "God has been so good to me, so good that I never can thank Him enough. That Gertie should be my daughter and living with me all the time; oh, God, I do thank Thee, I do. Howard, you are glad too, glad for Gertie?"

She questioned him eagerly, and he answered her without the slightest hesitancy:

"Yes, Edith, very glad."

And he was glad, and when, as he was leaving Mrs. Westbrooke, that lady said to him, "Pardon me, if I seem curious,

but what is the girl Gertie to this lady?" he promptly answered: "Gertie is *our* daughter," and with that little pronoun *our* he adopted Gertie into his heart and love, and felt that she was his as well as Edith's.

"Our daughter!" That was what he called her to his wife, who clasped her arms around his neck in token that she appreciated this last great kindness of his.

Then they talked together of the beautiful girl whom they had come so far to seek, when all the time she was a part of their own household, and as they talked there naturally enough crept into Edith's mind the shadow of a fear, lest, after all, there might be some mistake. But there was none apparently, for the colonel made every inquiry possible with regard to Mary Rogers, finding beyond a doubt that she was Mary Stover, and that her sister Anne had been a nurse in — Street Hospital nineteen years before, and that it was by their mother, then living in Dorset Street, that the child was taken when it left the hospital. There could be no doubt, and as Edith was far too weak and too much overcome to undertake the journey home immediately, the colonel decided to remain a week or two in London, and wrote at once to Glenthorpe, asking Robert to bring Emma to them, but reserving the secret of Gertie's birth until they came. Then he wrote to Gertie herself, but thought it better not to confide the whole to her until he saw her face to face. So he merely said that being in London he had thought it well to make some inquiries at the — Bank, and, if possible, discover something of her family.

"And dear Gertie," he wrote, "you will be no less astonished and delighted than I was to find that beyond the shadow of a doubt you are *our own daughter*. I cannot tell you all on paper. I only assure you that it is true, and when we return I will explain it to you. Mrs. Schuyler is not very well, but I hope she will be able to return in the *Cuba*, which sails in two weeks. With love and a kiss for little Arthur, who, I trust, is well, I am,

"Your affectionate father,

H. SCHUYLER."

This was his letter, which he read to Edith, who said : " But, Howard, you never told her how my heart is aching for her, or gave her my love or anything."

" Never mind," the colonel answered, good-naturedly. " You will have all your lifetime to tell her of your love."

And so the letter which would tell Gertie so much, and yet so little, was sent, and two days after Robert Macpherson arrived in London, bringing with him Emma, the little lady of Glenthorpe, who was perfectly wild over her husband and her beautiful home among the Highlands, and insisted that her father should go there if only for a few days. You must see what a good mistress I make, and what a high-bred lady I am to the people who just worship Robert, and I do believe like him all the more because his mother was one of them. I begin to believe in what are called *mésalliances* after all.

Now was the time to tell the story of another *mésalliance*, and the colonel told it, while Robert and Emma listened breathlessly, and when the *denouement* was reached the latter exclaimed, joyfully :

" Oh, I am so glad, that it is Gertie. She is your cousin, Robert, your own cousin, and it is all just like a story. Oh, I am so glad !"

She evidently did not think it so dreadful to be connected with the Lyles. She had seen the white-haired, sweet-faced old woman in Alnwick, and seen Jenny Nesbit, too, for Robert had taken her there to call, and she had fallen in love with the grandmother, and tried to pet Godfrey Schuyler, now a big boy in jacket and trousers, and had sickened and grown hot and cold by turns at the vulgarity of Mrs. Nesbit, and then in the splendor and *éclat* of her home at Glenthorpe had forgotten them all and remembered only that she was Robert's wife, the great lady of the neighborhood and the happiest woman living. Gertie should come and live with her, she said, and marry a Scottish Lord ; but Edith shook her head, Gertie was hers. She could not part with her, and her heart was full of an unutterable yearning to behold the young girl again, and hear her call her mother, and she could hardly wait for the day when the

Cuba sailed at last from the harbor of Liverpool, and she knew she was going home to Gertie.

CHAPTER LVI.

GERTIE.

NO. 30 30TH STREET, NEW YORK, *February 18, 18—.*



O COLONEL SCHUYLER: Your son Godfrey is very dangerously ill with typhoid fever. Come at once.

MRS. SOPHIA WILSON.

This was the telegram received at Schuyler Hill one morning in February, and read by Gertie with a heart throbbing with fear and anxiety for the young man dangerously ill with typhoid fever, and only strangers to care for him. But what could she do? The colonel was in Europe, Julia was in Florida, while she had little Arthur to care for, and even if she had not she could not go herself. It would not be proper under any circumstances, and the colonel would not like it. Something, however, must be done, and calling Mrs. Tiffe she read the telegram and said to her:

"You must go."

So it was arranged that Mrs. Tiffe should take the next train for New York, which passed in about an hour, and she departed to make the necessary arrangements for her journey, just as the postman came bringing a letter for Gertie. It was from Colonel Schuyler, and Gertie tore it open and read what it contained with emotions which it is impossible to describe. At first she was stunned and bewildered, and thought it must be somebody else, some other Gertie he meant.

"It is not I, surely; it cannot be I, who am *his daughter*," she whispered to herself, and then she read again:

"Beyond the shadow of a doubt you are *our own daughter*."

It was there in black and white, and it was Colonel Schuyler's signature, and he signed himself *her* father. Then the

room turned dark to Gertie ; there was a humming in her ears, and for a moment she half lost her consciousness, but soon recovering she read the letter for the third time, whispering to herself :

" My father,—his child,—who then was my mother ? " and as she said it her face flushed with shame as she thought what *she* must be if this tale were true and Colonel Schuyler her sire. She never dreamed of associating Edith with the matter in any way. Only Colonel Schuyler had an interest in her, and that of such a nature that the knowledge of it brought far more pain than pleasure to one as pure and good as she.

If Colonel Schuyler were her father, then the man whom she vaguely remembered in the home near London could have been nothing to her, and for this she was not especially sorry. But to lose the gentlewoman whom she had been taught to think her mother, was terrible, and Gertie rebelled against it. She would cling to the memory of *that* woman, even if she had sinned, as the story of her birth would imply. And this was why Mary Rogers had always been so reticent with regard to her antecedents, why she had spoken with so much certainty of her mother as a lady, and said so little of her father. Possibly Mary had not known *who* her father was, and possibly the man whom she remembered was only the brother or father of the pale woman who died, and that would account for his dislike of her. These and similar fancies flitted rapidly through Gertie's mind, until she settled it beyond a doubt that the man she called father, and who she thought was buried in Italy, had been her mother's near relation, and not her father, that no marriage rite could have hallowed her birth, and as she thought it her face and neck and hands were crimson, and she longed for some place in which to hide her dishonored head. Then, swift as lightning, another thought flashed into her mind, cutting like a knife and making her cringe with pain. If she was Colonel Schuyler's daughter, even in an unlawful way, then Godfrey was her brother, and alas, she did not want him that. She could never be his wife, she knew ; but it was sweet to know he

"Oh, Godfrey, Godfrey!" she moaned; "this is the hardest part of all. I can forgive my mother, feeling sure that she was more sinned against than sinning, and I may in time forgive your father and mine; but I do not want you for my brother. Godfrey, Godfrey, I never loved you before as I do now, when this has risen up to separate us forever."

Then she remembered the telegram, and starting up exclaimed:

"If I am his sister I may surely go to him. I have a right, and no one can gainsay it."

She was in Mrs. Tiffe's room in an instant, and greatly astonished that good woman by declaring her intention of going herself to New York to take care of Godfrey.

"You, *you* go to nurse a young man! Are you crazy, child?" Mrs. Tiffe exclaimed.

Gertie did not know whether she was crazy or not; she half believed she was, but on one point she was decided. She should go to New York, and she put on her cloak and furs and hat, and bidding Mrs. Tiffe take good care of Arthur, and send her a few articles of wearing apparel by the next day's express, went out of the house and started for the station on foot before Mrs. Tiffe had time to realize fully what it meant, and that after all the trouble of packing her trunk and ordering the servants what to do in her absence, she must stay at home and let Gertie go in her place.

"It will be the ruination of her," she said, "for folks will talk," and nothing but the fact that the whistle of the train was just then heard in the distance, prevented her from starting in hot pursuit. "I can't get there now with the swiftest horse in the stable," she reflected, and she did not believe Gertie would be in time either.

But she was, for when she too heard the train she ran like a frightened deer, and half-stumbled, half-fell upon the platform of the rear car just as it was beginning to move from the station.

CHAPTER LVII.

IN NEW YORK.

ODFREY was very sick, and had been for some days, though it was not until the morning when the telegram was forwarded that his fever assumed the typhoid form and danger was apprehended. A message had been sent to his Aunt Rossiter when he first became ill, but she was in Washington with Miss Creighton, and as the landlady knew nothing of the Calverts, her only alternative was to telegraph to Schuyler Hill, when the matter became alarming and her boarder delirious. Oh, how he tossed and rolled and raved and talked, fancying himself on the sea, and twice throwing himself out of bed because that was the proper thing to do when the ship gave a great lurch as the waves broke over it. Then he was sea-sick and tried to vomit, and wore himself out in his efforts, and screamed to a fancied *Bob* in the upper berth, to know how he was coming through. Then he stormed at *Dan* for bringing him sea-water to drink, and when the ship began to pitch again he tried to stand upon his head, and then sprang back upon his feet to preserve his equilibrium, he said to the scandalized and horrified Mrs. Wilson, who fled from him in dismay as the worst-behaved sick man she had ever seen. Then as the vessel ceased to pitch he grew more quiet, and only rolled with the imaginary ship, and talked about "*La Sœur*," and begged his landlady to bring her to him, and promised to stop rolling if she would.

Utterly at her wits' end to know what he meant by *La Sœur*, or what to do with him, Mrs. Wilson was waiting impatiently for some response to her telegram, when the bell rang and a little, white-faced girl stepped into the hall and announced herself as having come to take care of Mr. Schuyler.

"You take care of him?" Mrs. Wilson exclaimed, when she had recovered from her first astonishment and surprise. "You

take care of him? It is impossible. Why, it needs a strong man to manage him; he is just awful; he's got it in his head that he is sea-sick, and rolls and pitches with the boat, and calls to Bob in the upper berth, and insists upon my bringing him *la surr*, whatever that may be——"

"Yes, that's *sister*, that's French,—that's I," Gertie said. "I am his sister, and have come to nurse him. His father is in Europe, his eldest sister Julia is in Florida, the next one is in Scotland, and so there was no one to come but me. Will you take me to him, please?"

After this explanation there was no demurring on Mrs. Wilson's part. If that young girl was his sister she had a right to nurse her brother, and she led the way to the third floor, where in the room looking into the area Godfrey was still rolling with the ship, and occasionally mimicking and calling to some *cats* fighting on the fence in the yard below. These cats had been the bane of Godfrey's life even before he was sick. Regularly every night they came, sometimes two, sometimes three, and sometimes half-a-dozen, and made the neighborhood hideous with their music.

Godfrey had thrown his boot-jack at them, and his poker and soap-dish and bits of coal, and when all these failed he had tried the effect of fire-crackers and frightened the people opposite, who thought him a madman trying to fire the house! And still the cats fought on, and since Godfrey's illness they had been terrible, and he was up on his elbow "sca-ating" to them, when the door opened and Gertie was ushered in. He knew her, and forgetting the cats and the ship, and Bob in the upper berth, he hailed her advent with a cry of joy.

"*La Sœur, La Sœur*," he cried, "you've come,—you've come at last, and now you'll stop that infernal noise and make the ship stand still. I'm pounded nearly to a jelly with all this rolling and pitching."

He held his arms toward her, and she went to him and laid her cool hands on his burning brow, and pushed back his tangled curls, but did not kiss him. She could not bring herself to do that, even if she were his sister, but she held his hot hands

in hers and tried to soothe and quiet him, and told him she would kill the cats and make the ship stand still, and talked to him till he grew quiet and fell away to sleep.

When the doctor came, he was told that Mr. Schuyler's sister was there, and Gertie blushed and felt herself a guilty thing when he addressed her as Miss Schuyler, and gave directions about the medicines she was to give, and asked if there was no older person to come in her place.

"None but the housekeeper, and Godfrey prefers me," she said, while Godfrey, who was listening, chimed in :

"That's so. I'd rather have Gertie than the whole world besides. She's a trump,—she's a brick,—she's a——"

"Hush, Godfrey, if you want me to stay you must not talk," Gertie said, laying her hand upon his lips.

He kissed it, of course, and when she snatched it away, told her to put it back again if she did not want him to roll out of bed with the ship, which was lurching awfully ! And she put it back and held it there so tight that he could neither kiss it nor speak, nor scarcely breathe.

"Godfrey," she said a little sternly, when the doctor had gone out, "if you do not behave and stop talking and trying to kiss me, and if you attempt to roll out of bed, or get up, no matter how much the ship rocks, I will not stay with you a moment, but go home in the next train."

This had the desired effect and brought forth earnest protestations of intended good behavior from Godfrey, who promised not to move but "to stand to his guns," even if the ship should turn a complete somersault, which he guessed it would, judging from the way it was reeling and tossing now.

After that he was comparatively quiet, or if he became very restless and showed a disposition to repeat his tumbling exploits when the sea was badly in his head, a word from Gertie controlled him and kept him on his pillow. But his fever ran higher and higher every day, and his pulse beat faster and faster as the imaginary ship went plunging through the waves which threatened to engulf it.

Gertie had told him she was his sister, that his father had

written so from London, and once when he seemed something like himself she read the letter to him, but he repelled the idea with scorn. She was *not* his sister. He did not want any more sisters. She was Gertie,—his Gertie,—his in spite of everybody, he said, and he seemed to know just when she was with him, even if he did not see her, and when she left the room he would moan and rave and talk until she came back, and by a touch of her hand or a single word made him quiet again.

And so the days went on, and the fever increased, and the vessel rocked worse and worse, and Godfrey's brain grew more and more affected, and Gertie's heart was very sore with the fear that he would die. "Brother" she called him now when she spoke to him, and he was no longer furious as he had been at that name coming from her lips. He did not seem to know what she said, only that she was with him,—that it was her hand which gave the medicine he would take from no one else,—her hand which bathed his temples and kept him firmly in his place when the sea was doing its worst,—her hand which rescued his poor, aching head from the stewardess, who was boiling water in it to make him some beef-tea. Oh, what dreadful fancies he had,—fancies which were wearing him out so fast, and which nobody could manage but Gertie. And her strength was giving way, and the roses were fading from her cheek, when one morning, about ten days after her arrival in New York, a servant knocked at the door and ushered in Miss Rossiter.

She had returned from Washington the night before, and, finding the note which had been sent to her when Godfrey became so ill, had come immediately after breakfast to see how he was. With a feeling that it would not be proper for her to go into his sick room, Alice, who was stopping up town, remained at home, bidding Miss Rossiter give her love to Godfrey, and tell him she would come if he wished to see her.

Mrs. Wilson was out marketing when Miss Rossiter came, and whatever information that lady received concerning her nephew, she had from the servant who escorted her to his room.

"His sister with him! I did not know she had returned,"

she said, in some surprise, when in reply to the question, "Who takes care of him?" the servant said:

"His sister, ma'am. She has been here more than a week."

Miss Rossiter had spent a day in Hampstead the previous summer, and seen Gertie; but she had no thought of her now, and was utterly astonished and confounded, as she entered the room, to find Gertie Westbrooke sitting by Godfrey, who was sleeping from the effects of a powerful opiate which the doctor had administered an hour or so before.

At the sound of the opening door she looked up and gave a warning "Sh-hh!" as Miss Rossiter exclaimed, loudly:

"Gertie,—Gertie Westbrooke! Why are *you* here calling yourself his *sister*? Are you not ashamed? What does it mean? Tell me before I venture to stop a moment in the same room with you!"

And the highly indignant and rigidly virtuous spinster held back her clothes lest they should come in contact with the garments of the young girl, thus outraging every rule of propriety if not of decency.

Alice, who had been and in some sense still considered herself his affianced wife, would not so much as come to the house unless it was necessary, while even *she*, a matron of fifty and more, had some doubts about going herself into the room; and lo, here was the young girl,—this stranger,—sitting by him with the utmost familiarity, and bidding her be quiet and speak lower lest the sick man should awaken.

Miss Rossiter was greatly shocked, and, as her first question was not answered except by a look of innocent wonder, she repeated it angrily:

"Why are you here, passing for his sister? Don't you know your good name will be ruined forever?"

Only an hour before the doctor had said to Gertie:

"There is but one chance in a hundred for your brother. If he can be made to sleep and be kept quiet, he may recover, but if the paroxysms and his fancy about the ship return he will die. Do your best for him."

In dumb despair Gertie listened to him with such pain in her heart as sisters never feel.

"I'll do my best," she said, and her white lips quivered, but she did not cry as she took her seat by Godfrey to watch him while he slept, and thought what life would be to her without him. "Godfrey dead, Godfrey dead," she whispered, softly "I should want to die, too. Oh, Godfrey, you are more than my brother, more than my brother.

It was just as she said this that Miss Rossiter came in, and the sick man stirred upon his pillow as if about to waken. He must not wake. It was death to do so, and Gertie bent protectingly over him as a mother bends over her restless child, and until it was twice repeated she did not answer the astonished woman's question, "Why are you here, and why call yourself his sister?"

Then she turned, and fixing her blue eyes steadily on the lady, she said, in a low whisper :

"Col. Schuyler is in Europe ; there was no one else to come, and I *am* his sister ; read that."

She had the colonel's letter in her pocket, where she kept it constantly, and she passed it to Miss Rossiter, who read it rapidly, and then, more surprised and bewildered than she had ever been in her life, began to question Gertie, who, of course, could offer no explanation.

"The thing is simply impossible. Colonel Schuyler was not in Europe nineteen years ago," Miss Rossiter said, after a little mental calculation.

"Mother might have been in America," was Gertie's response, quietly and sadly spoken, and then Miss Rossiter began again to question her as to what she herself knew of her antecedents, or what she had heard from Mary Rogers.

The murmur of voices disturbed Godfrey, who moaned about the ship which would not be still. Then Gertie said to her companion :

"Miss Rossiter, you *must not* talk. If Godfrey gets well he must sleep ; the doctor said so. He has fancied himself in a ship at sea, and endured all the agonies of sea-sickness. I have

succeeded in making him believe he was on the land, but if the ship gets back into his head, he will die."

She spoke decidedly, like one who had a right, and the proud woman bit her lip with vexation, but obeyed the girl who had so suddenly come before her in a new phase of character. She could not credit the story she had heard, and yet there it was in the colonel's handwriting, "You are our daughter." Even she never thought of Edith as connected with it, and in her own mind she ran over the name of every lady of her acquaintance who could by any possibility be implicated in the affair. But all in vain. She could find no clue to the mystery, and was obliged to give it up and wait for further developments when the colonel returned. Though she did not fully believe the story she felt more kindly toward Gertie, and when at last Godfrey awoke and was in the ship again, and insisted that *La Sœur* should sit behind him and hold his head on her bosom to keep it from bumping against the side of the berth, she bade Gertie sit there, and offered no remonstrance when the pale face bent so low over the flushed, feverish one that the girl's bright hair mingled with the brown curls of the sick man who called her "*La petite capitaine*," and said she was steering him through the waves like an old salt!

Miss Rossiter could not go home while matters were in this state, and she wrote a note to Alice, asking that a dressing-gown might be sent to her with a few other articles necessary for the sick-room. Alice brought them herself, and sat in the parlor and cried when Miss Rossiter told her of Godfrey, and opened her eyes with wonder when told of Gertie and the relation she bore to Colonel Schuyler, if his word could be trusted. Alice believed it, and it lifted a load from her mind. If Gertie was Godfrey's sister, then she ceased to be a rival, and in the first revulsion of feeling Alice felt very kindly toward Gertie, and expressed so strong a desire to see her that, at Miss Rossiter's request, Gertie went down to the little lady, who received her rather gushingly. Alice forgave easily, and when she saw Gertie so pale and worn, and knew that it came from watching by Godfrey when there was no one else to care for

him, she forgot her old animosity entirely, and kissing her twice told her what a good girl she was to stay with Godfrey when he was so sick, and the fever catching, perhaps.

"And you are his sister, too?" she continued. "It is very strange, but I am so glad, and everything will turn out well if Godfrey only lives. Do you think he will?"

Gertie could not tell. He was very sick, she said, and she seemed so anxious to return to him that Alice arose to go. Standing a moment irresolutely and looking at Gertie she said:

"You are a nice little girl, and always were, and when Godfrey can understand, will you tell him I have been here, and that I am so sorry, and—and——"

She could not quite say what she wanted to, but Gertie knew what she meant, and answered her:

"I'll tell him, and do all I can for you. I think it will come right now."

She said it sadly, with a pang of regret for the condition of things which might result in healing the difference between Godfrey and Alice, and her heart was very heavy as she went back to her patient, who was conducting himself outrageously. They were in a regular north-easter, he said, and the ship was bottom side up, and he was bottom side up with it, and to the horror of his aunt had rolled himself and the bed-clothes out upon the floor, where he lay calling for *La capitaine* to come and right the ship! With the help of her man-servant, who had accompanied Alice, and who was to stay as long as he was needed, Miss Rossiter got her nephew back to bed, and when Gertie came in he was panting with exhaustion, and evidently bracing himself against another lurch.

"Don't desert," he whispered to Gertie. "We had a tremendous swell while you were away, and things generally got topsy-turvy."

That *swell* was the last. He never attempted to roll again, but sank gradually into a state of unconsciousness more alarming than the lurches of the imaginary ship had been. The vessel was quiet now, wrecked, and going down so fast, it seemed to the heart-broken girl who watched beside poor Godfrey day

and night with a look of anguish on her face which touched Miss Rossiter, and awoke within her a feeling of interest for the heart-sore creature, whose pain she in a measure understood.

At last the colonel came. He had gone straight to Hampstead within an hour after landing in New York, and hearing from Mrs. Tiffe of his son's illness, and that a telegram to the effect that he was worse had been received that afternoon, he had taken the night train back to the city, leaving Edith at Schuyler Hill, as she was not able to accompany him. Thus it was near midnight when he reached Mrs. Wilson's boarding-house, and asked eagerly for his son.

"Very bad,—dying we fear," was the report, and he sped swiftly up the stairs, stumbling in the upper landing over a little figure which sat crying on the floor.

It was Alice who had come down that afternoon to inquire for Godfrey, and on learning of his condition had refused to go home, and lingered outside the door of the room she would not enter lest she should be guilty of an indiscretion, or, perhaps, contract the fever.

Poor Godfrey, how white and ghastly and quiet he was now, as with his eyes shut he lay with his head pillowed on Gertie's arm, and one of his hands holding to her dress as if afraid of losing her.

Gertie had sat thus for more than an hour gazing upon the pale face she held, her eyes heavy with unshed tears, for she could not cry any more. Her heart ached too hard for that. Godfrey was dying,—*her* Godfrey,—he said he was the last time he spoke to her, and he had called her his little Gertie, and kissed her hand and bade her stay with him on the ship which was sailing in smooth waters now and was almost at the shore. And he was hers,—her brother, perhaps, but still hers more than anybody else's in all the wide, wide world.

Alice had sent a message to her : " Kiss him once for me ! " but Gertie would not do it. She might, perhaps, kiss a dead Godfrey, but Godfrey living must know when she kissed him, and why, and so she only held his head and wiped the sweat

from his brow, and let her own face fall over and touch his for a minute, while she whispered in his ear and asked if he still heard her and knew she was with him.

And it was thus she sat when the colonel came, and going up to his son called him by his name. But there was no response, no sign, and the physician who stood waiting, said :

"He heeds no one but his sister. Speak to him, Miss Schuyler. See if he knows you now."

Then, over the whiteness of Gertie's face, there came a flush at hearing herself called Miss Schuyler in the presence of the colonel, but she put her lips close to Godfrey's ear, and said :

"Godfrey, do you know me yet?"

"Yes, *my* Gertie, stick to the ship, we are about ready to land," was the faint reply ; and with a bitter cry, as if at the sight of the man who called himself her father every barrier had gone down, Gertie gave way, and winding both her arms round the form she held, sobbed passionately :

"Oh, Godfrey, my darling, if you *can* hear me now, listen while I tell you how much I love you, for I do,—I *do*, oh, Godfrey, oh, Colonel Schuyler," and she lifted her white face piteously to him. "Forgive me, if I am wrong, I cannot,—*can not* love him as a brother."

Her head drooped upon her bosom, and it was in vain that Godfrey whispered :

"Steady now, *La petite capitaine*, the boat is running into port."

CHAPTER LVIII.

GERTIE AND THE STORY.



GERTIE did not go into Godfrey's room again, nor was it necessary, as he was very quiet and seemed to be sleeping, while his father sat by him with his head bowed down, and such marks of age upon him that Miss Rossiter asked him if he were sick. He did not hear her at first, and she said, again :

"Howard, are you sick? Have you any trouble on your mind?"

Then he looked up, with a faint smile, and answered her:

'Trouble? sick? No, not sick, and no trouble now; that is past. I say, Christine, have I grown very old? isn't my hair turning gray? I did not like to ask Edith, because, you see, ~~the~~—the trouble concerned her the most.'

Miss Rossiter was sure of it. That woman, whom she never liked, had shown her colors at last, and here was the result in the colonel's bowed form and fast-turning hair. He *had* grown old and his hair *was* gray, and she told him so, and added:

"Poor Howard, tell me about it. I knew it must come to this when you married her."

"Did *you* know anything about it?" the colonel asked, in some surprise; and Miss Rossiter replied:

"Know about what? I knew it was a *mésalliance*, and they always prove unhappy."

"Hush, Christine, it is not that," and the colonel spoke sternly, "Edith is a noble woman. She has been so tempted and tried, and is so broken now. Christine, I wish you were her friend, my friend. I want so much to unburden myself to some one. It would be such a relief. Christine, try and like my wife, and let me tell you the strangest tale you ever heard, and let me feel that we have your sympathy and support in the storm which will blow so hard."

He looked at her so pleadingly that Miss Rossiter's heart was moved, and she said:

"I like *you*, Howard, and know nothing against Edith as a woman. She is beautiful and you love her, and I daresay she is good, and I will be your friend: tell me the story, please; is it about Gertie? She showed me your letter in which you ~~called~~ her your daughter. What does it mean?"

Colonel Schuyler glanced at his son, who was still sleeping quietly, then drawing his chair closer to Miss Rossiter and speaking in the lowest possible whisper for her to hear, he told her the story from beginning to end. And Miss Rossiter neither

fainted nor went into hysterics, but for her behaved remarkably well, and with the exception of a few ejaculations of amazement when the story was at the most exciting point, never spoke a word until the colonel had told her everything there was to tell. Then her first remark was :

"I am so glad it is Gertie. You need not be ashamed of *her*."

"Thank you, Christine," the colonel said ; "and now who will tell her, you or I, and when?"

"*You*, and as soon as she can bear it. I think she is too tired now, too much fatigued ; she ought to have perfect rest. If I knew Godfrey was out of danger I should take her home with me. Perhaps I had better do it anyway," Miss Rossiter replied, wondering at herself and her interest in Gertie Westbrooke, and why she could not feel more indignant at *that woman*, who really had been in a way an impostor after all.

Miss Rossiter was peculiar, and often did things and took fancies which astonished those who knew her best. And this was one of her fancies. Colonel Schuyler had confided in her first, had told her everything, and asked her to stand by him, and she was going to, and would begin by being very kind to Gertie, toward whom she had been greatly drawn during the days and nights they had watched together by Godfrey's bedside. After her conference with the colonel was finished, and the doctor had been in and declared the danger past for Godfrey, she went to Gertie and Alice in the adjoining room and telling them the good news, said to the former :

"Colonel Schuyler and myself both think it better for you to go where you can have perfect rest and quiet for a few days, lest you take the fever also. My carriage will be here in an hour or so ; you know it comes every day, and as I am not needed at present, I shall go home and take you with me."

Gertie was lying on the couch, with her hands pressed to her head, which was aching terribly. But she put them away, and lifting her heavy eyes wonderingly to Miss Rossiter's face said :

"Go home with *you* ! Do *you* wish it?"

"Certainly ; I should not suggest it if I did not," Miss Rossiter answered, a little stiffly.

And Gertie continued :

"But my,—Colonel Schuyler,—he has not told me yet. I must know about that before I can rest anywhere."

"Yes ; but you must rest a little first, he says. You will need strength and courage both to hear what he has just told me," Miss Rossiter replied ; and then, as Gertie was about to speak again, she added : "Not a word more at present. This afternoon, if he can leave Godfrey, the colonel will come and tell you all."

And with this Gertie was obliged to be satisfied ; and an hour later she was driven with Miss Rossiter to the handsome house far up town, which she had never thought it possible for her to enter as she was entering it now.

Alice had decided to go to her own home proper at Uncle Calvert's, and Gertie was alone with Miss Rossiter, who gave her the room near hers, where Alice slept when she was there.

And here, late in the day, Colonel Schuyler came, and was brought up by Miss Rossiter, who withdrew and left him alone with Gertie.

She was pale as marble, save where two bright red spots burned on her cheeks, and her eyes were heavy as lead, but they brightened with eagerness and excitement when the colonel came in and drew his chair beside her as she lay upon the couch.

"Don't try to rise," he said, as she made an effort to sit up. "You are too tired and worn ; keep as you are while I am talking to you. Gertie, it is a very strange story I am about to tell you, and that it may come to you by degrees, I will tell you first why we went to England so suddenly, and that when we went we had no thought of you, or that we should discover who you were. We were hunting for another child."

Gertie was looking steadily at him, and her eyes never left his face while he told her the story, beginning with the time when he first asked Edith to be his wife, and she hinted at a page of her life of which she wished to tell him, and which after so many years, had come to him by accident.

"I have the letter with me," he said; "I brought it on purpose to read to you, as it will tell the story so much better than I can."

Taking out Edith's letter he read it aloud, while Gertie's eyes deepened their gaze upon his face, and the red all died from her cheeks, which were of an ashen hue, as when the letter was finished, he went on to tell how the child was not dead, as Edith had supposed, and of their search in London, which they gave at last into the hands of the police.

"Then, while we were waiting," he said, "I thought to make some inquiries about you at the office where your annuity is paid. There I heard of a Mrs. Westbrooke, recently from Florence, and to her we went, hoping she might know something of you, and she did. She was the second wife of the man who was not your father, but whose first wife adopted you when her own baby died. Her maid, Mary Stover, afterward Mrs. Rogers, told her of you, and brought you to her from her mother, who had taken you from the — Street Foundling Hospital, where you had been left on the steps, and where Mary Stover's sister Anne was at that time nurse.

"Gertie, are you going to faint? Do you hear me? Do you understand?" the colonel asked, alarmed at the expression of the face still confronting him so steadily, and never moving a muscle any more than if the features had been chiselled in stone.

"Yes, I think—I understand," came huskily from the livid lips, "that baby, born in Dorset Street, and left on the hospital steps, and hunted for by you—and—and—her—was—was—I, and she—your—Mrs. Schuyler—is—my mother—and that—that grave I've tended always—is—is my father's!"

She understood it perfectly, but the colonel thought to make it clearer by saying:

"Yes, Gertie, you are the child of my wife, Mrs. Schuyler born in lawful wedlock, and Abelard Lyle was your father!"

He opened the window and carried Gertie to it, and let the cool air blow on her, and dashed water on her face, and only that he had seen Edith thus more than once would have

thought her dead, when he laid her back upon the couch and went to summon help. Miss Rossiter watched with Gertie that night and many other nights, while the fever contracted at Godfrey's bedside, and brought to a crisis by the terrible shock which she had sustained, ran its course. There were a few moments of consciousness that first night, when Gertie's eyes opened and looked up at Miss Rossiter, who was bending over her.

"Am I very sick?" she asked faintly, and Miss Rossiter replied:

"Pretty sick, yes; but we hope to have you well soon if you are quiet."

"Am I going to have the fever like Godfrey?"

"Yes, we think you are, though not so hard."

"Miss Rossiter, if I am very sick, *very*,—I want *her* to come, —*mother*,—Mrs. Schuyler,—you know."

"Yes, I know."

"And if I don't know her, if I *never* know her, tell her please, that I have loved her since I first saw her a bride in England, and gave the flowers to her; and tell her, too, I've loved that Heloise Fordham ever since Miss Armstrong told me about her and the lover who died, and my name is Heloise, too,—Gertrude Heloise,—and there's a spot of blood right over my heart; she will find it there if I die."

"Yes, I will tell her."

"And tell Godfrey,—oh, what message shall I leave for Godfrey? Tell him I loved him,—more than he ever knew; but he must marry Alice for my sake. Tell him it was my wish."

"I'll tell him."

"And Miss Rossiter, let me kiss you once, please, because you are so kind. I used to think you proud, and guess I did not like you, but I do now. I like everybody."

The kiss was given, and, stranger's part of all, returned, for Miss Rossiter's heart was very soft toward the young girl, who, having said all she had to say, folded her hands upon her bosom, and whispering the little prayer, "Now I lay me," learned when she was a child, sank into unconsciousness, from which she did

not awake until the first April rains were falling, and there was a breath of coming summer in the soft spring air. If that sickness can be called pleasant when the fever runs so high that the pulse cannot be counted, and the breath of life almost fleets away, then Gertie's sickness was a pleasant one, and never sure before or since was there a patient so docile, and quiet, and manageable as she, taking always what they bade her take, lying just where they put her, and seldom moving hand or foot save as they moved them for her. Like Godfrey, she was out on the broad sea, sailing away to parts unknown, but with her there were no storms, no sudden lurches, no rollings, no pitchings, no swelling waves threatening to engulf her. All was smooth and quiet and calm, as a river of glass, and the sun by day shone upon the water, flecking it with spots of gold, while the moon and stars at night looked down on the blue expanse, and lit it up with sheets of silvery light, into which Gertie went gliding, with Godfrey at her side. Always Godfrey, who stood at the helm and managed the oars, and managed the sails, and talked to her of love, which it was right for her now to accept. In that pleasant dream there was no Alice in the way, no father to dissent, but all was bright and clear, and the boat went drifting on and on, always in moonlight or sunlight, always on a smooth, still sea, till they came in sight of a far-off country, where golden streets and gates of pearl gleamed in the setting sun, and the boat paused mid stream, and waited whether the soul would cross to the beautiful city, or turning, take the homeward route and come back to life again. It chose the latter, and came slowly back, with sails all drooping and torn, and more ripples on the waves than had been in the journey out. Godfrey was no longer in the boat, Gertie had lost him somewhere, and was hunting sadly for him until a voice, which sounded much like his, said to her: "Gertie, I am here, and shall never leave you again."

Then her little plaintive moan, "Godfrey, oh, where is Godfrey?" ceased, and when she spoke again, it was to a beautiful woman, who, she thought, was standing by her, and calling her "my daughter." Oh, how that mother-love brooded over

the sick girl, soothing and quieting and comforting her, and with its pleading prayers bringing at last the healing power which unlocked the sleeping senses, and made Gertie whole again. For Edith was there with her, and had been since the third day of her illness, when the colonel's telegram went up the river, saying: "Gertie is very sick. Come immediately."

CHAPTER LIX.

THE STORY IN HAMPSTEAD.

I WAS at the Hill when the telegram was received. In fact I had been there ever since the day of Edith's return from Europe and the colonel's departure for New York. I had with others been waiting anxiously for them, for I knew how sick Godfrey was, and that Gertie, whether right or wrong, was helping to nurse him. So when I saw the carriage drive past the door, and caught a glimpse of Edith, I went over at once, and was shocked beyond measure to see how she had changed. All the roundness had left her cheeks, her bright color was gone, and in her tresses of golden brown there were a few threads of silver. And still, despite all this, she was very lovely, with such a subdued gentleness of manner and sweet expression of face that I felt the tears rush to my eyes every time I looked at her.

"Stay with me, Ettie, while the colonel is absent," she said, and she seemed so anxious for my company that I consented to remain, and after Colonel Schuyler was gone we went up to her room, where she paced up and down, up and down, with a restlessness for which I could not account, unless it came from anxiety for Godfrey.

At last I said:

"You are troubled about Godfrey, Mrs. Schuyler," and she replied:

"Yes,—no. I was not thinking of him, but of Gertie. Ettie,

do you remember the people who lived in the cottage years ago, Mrs. Fordham and her daughter ? ”

“ Yes,” I replied, “ I remember them well. Why do you ask me that question ? ”

She was standing by the window now, gazing wistfully at the cottage and the smoke curling from the chimney.

“ Did you like that girl ? Heloise was her name,” she said, without answering my question.

“ Yes,” I answered, “ I was very fond of her, and thought her so beautiful, and I have often wondered where she was that she neither came back nor wrote, when she promised to do both.”

Crossing swiftly to my side and laying a hand on each of my shoulders she looked me steadily in the eye, and said :

“ Ettie, is there anything in *my* face which reminds you of that girl ? ”

Then it came to me like a flash of lightning ; all the perplexity and wonder I had at times experienced with regard to Mrs. Schuyler was made clear, and without stopping to think how it could be and thinking only that it was, I said :

“ *You* are Heloise ! ” while my knees shook so that I was compelled to sit down upon the nearest chair to keep myself from falling.

“ Yes, I was Heloise Fordham once,” she answered, her lip quivering and the great tears gathering in her eyes and rolling down her cheeks. “ Ettie,” she continued, “ I wanted to tell you so many times, but dared not, for until that sickness of mine in November my husband even did not know it.”

At this I looked up in surprise, and she went on :

“ I asked you to stay with me that I might tell you the story first, and let you break it to the people, for I will have no more concealments.”

Then she told me the whole story, and to my dying day I shall not forget the ringing sweetness and joy in her voice when she said :

“ Gertie is my daughter.”

I had heard the rest of the story with a tolerable degree of

equanimity, but that last electrified me like the shock from a battery, and springing to my feet I exclaimed :

"Gertie your daughter ! Gertie your child !"

"Yes, Ettie, God has been good to me. He has taken care of my little baby-girl and made her into a woman whom any mother might love ; and oh, how I do love her, and how hard it is for me to stay here and know that she is only two hours' away. But we thought it best for my husband to go first and tell her before I saw her. He offered to do that ; he tries to spare me all he can ; oh, he is so good and kind, and has behaved so nobly through it all."

She was crying now, and I did not try to stop her, for I knew tears would do her good. And she was calmer after it, and talked with me until long after midnight of the strange story and the old life at the cottage when we both were girls.

Early the next morning the colonel's first telegram came : "Godfrey is very sick, but out of danger, we hope. Miss Rossiter and Gertie both here ; the latter well, but tired."

I doubt if Edith paid much attention to anything but the last of the telegram, the part relating to Gertie. This she read and re-read, as if there were a pleasure even in the sight of the dear name.

"You see Mrs. Westbrooke named her Gertrude for her own little girl who died," she explained to me, "and as she did not know whether she had been baptized or not she had her christened 'Gertrude Heloise Westbrooke,' so Westbrooke really is her name, and I am glad, for I know my husband would rather have it that than Lyle."

After lunch came another telegram : "Godfrey better. Gertie at Miss Rossiter's. Shall see her to-night."

That evening Edith was like a crazy woman walking up and down the halls, and then through her suite of rooms and back again into the hall, clasping her hands tightly together, and whispering to herself :

"Is it now he is telling her ? Does she know it yet ? And what does she think of me, her mother ? Will she call me by that name ? Oh, Gertie, if I could see you now. Heaven grant you do not hate me."

Suddenly she grew calm, and said to me :

"Something tells me it is over. Gertie knows the truth and does not hate me. Thank my Heavenly Father for that."

Edith slept that night, but was restless and impatient in the morning until the third message came. "She knows everything, and is very glad."

"Then why doesn't she come home?" Edith said, and all that day she was in a feverish state of expectancy when a train from New York came in.

But Gertie did not come, and the next day we read the words : "Gertie is very sick. Come immediately."

Then Edith frightened me, she turned so white and stood so still, while the iron fingers clutched her throat for the last time, and strangled her until her face was purple. I rang for help, but before it came the fingers relaxed their grasp, the natural color came back to the face, and Edith was herself again. Fortunately it was her maid who answered the ring, and telling her of the dispatch, and that she was going to New York, Edith bade her pack her travelling valise, and order the carriage for the next train, due in half an hour.

"Oh, Ettie," she cried, when we were alone, "God will not take her from me now. Pray that He will spare Gertie."

I think she prayed constantly, while getting herself ready, for her lips moved continually, and I caught the whispered words : "Don't,—don't," and knew she was pleading for Gertie's life. I went with her to the station and saw her on the train, and then returned to the Hill, charged with the responsibility of acquainting the household, and as many others as I saw fit with the story which it was better to have known while the family was absent.

I found Mrs. Tiffe in her own room, and with her a Mrs. Noall, a great gossip but a thoroughly good-natured and well-meaning woman, and though she told all she knew, never told any more, and always told it as she heard it. Here was a good opportunity for the news to be thoroughly disseminated without much help from me, further than the telling it first to my auditors. And this it was easy to do, for they were talking of

Mrs. Schuyler when I went in, and Mrs. Noall was wondering why they came home from Europe so suddenly, and why they both seemed so broken and worn. She *surmised* that the colonel's finances were in a very precarious condition; she knew he had suffered some heavy losses recently and perhaps he was going to fail.

"It is not that," I said. "It is something entirely different which has troubled Mr. and Mrs. Schuyler, and I have come in on purpose to tell you, as Mrs. Schuyler wishes the people to know it before her return."

Then, taking a chair between the two dames I told the story of Edith's life, interrupted frequently by questions and ejaculations from my auditors, both of whom were more amazed than they had ever been before in their lives. Mrs. Tiffe was the first to recover herself. *She* had the family dignity to maintain, and she was going to do it, and while she condemned the *Fordham woman* out and out, she stood firmly by Edith as more sinned against than sinning, and said that she for one thought more of her than ever, and that every right-minded person would agree with her, of course. Mrs. Noall, who was usually chary of offending Mrs. Tiffe, fully agreed with her, and both expressed unbounded delight that the lost child had proved to be Gertie Westbrooke, whom everybody loved.

"And that's what makes her sick, and why Mrs. Schuyler has gone to her. I see,—yes, I understand," Mrs. Noall said, and though she had intended stopping to dinner with Mrs. Tiffe, she declared that she must go at once, and she went, and to my certain knowledge made twenty calls before ten o'clock at night, and told the story twenty times without varying it in the least.

Of course there was nothing more for me to do except to answer the questions of those who came on purpose to inquire if what they had heard was true. Never before had I received so many calls within a given time as I did during the few days of excitement when Hampstead was alive with the story, and reminiscences of the Fordhams were brought up and comments of various kinds were made, according to the nature of those who made them. I think Mrs. Barton from the Ridge was the

most disturbed ; she had spent the winter in Hampstead, and she came to see me early, and stayed three hours, and talked the matter over, and wished that it had not been made public.

Mrs. Barton was a kind, good woman at heart, but very proud and particular about family and blood, and I knew she was thinking of Tom, who still avowed his intention to marry Gertie or nobody, and so I flamed up in Edith's defence, and said she was resolved to have no more concealments, that I *had* suggested to her the propriety of not telling who her first husband was, as that was sure to increase the talk and wonder.

"Mrs. Barton," I continued, "you ought to have seen her then, and heard how piteously she cried as she said to me, 'No, Ettie, I've thought that over, and talked it over with Col. Schuyler, who is willing for me to do as I like. To conceal it would look as if I was ashamed of Abelard, and I am not. He was my husband and I loved him, and Gertie and the world shall know who her father was.'"

"Noble woman !" Mrs. Barton exclaimed, crying a little herself. "I think she is right after all, and for one I shall stand by her."

Everybody stood by her, though everybody talked and wondered and exclaimed, and suddenly remembered that they always thought there was something familiar in Mrs. Schuyler's face and manner. Everybody, too, was anxious about Gertie, and the people cried on the Sunday when the prayer for the sick was read by our rector, Mr. Marks, whose voice trembled when he prayed for her. At last the one word "Better" flashed along the wires, and the boy from the office ran as he brought the telegram, telling everybody he met of the good news, and wiping his eyes on the sleeve of his coat as he handed the envelope to me, and said : "I guess she'll pull 'er through."

CHAPTER LX.

EDITH AND GERTIE.



WHEN Gertie wound her arms around Miss Rossiter's neck and kissed her so lovingly, she touched a chord in the woman's heart which had never been touched before,—a chord which, under favorable circumstances, would have vibrated with a mother's love, and which now brought to life so strong a liking for the helpless girl, that had there been no Edith in the way, Miss Rossiter would have adopted her at once as her own petted daughter. During the days and nights they had watched together by Godfrey's side, Gertie had crept a long way into Miss Rossiter's heart by her quiet, gentle manner, and her kind, unselfish thoughtfulness for her companion's comfort. More than once, when Miss Rossiter looked tired and worn, Gertie had made her lie down, and kneeling beside her had bathed and rubbed her head, and even her feet, and combed and brushed her hair, and had done it all as if it were a favor to herself rather than to her companion, whose duty it now was to care for her.

And Miss Rossiter did not shrink from the task imposed upon her. True, she wore a lump of camphor in her bosom to prevent infection, just as she had done in Godfrey's room, and she occasionally swallowed a pill of morphine, and kept the house full of chloride of lime, and used every disinfectant of which she had ever heard, and hired a nurse to take care of Gertie, but stood by her all the same, and saw that the doctor's orders were obeyed. The third day Col. Schuyler said to her, when he came to look at Gertie :

"Christine, you are doing nobly, and I thank you so much but I must test you still further. Gertie's mother ought to be here when her child is so sick. Are you willing I should send for her?"

"Certainly," Miss Rossiter replied, with a little darker shade

on her face. ' Send for her by all means. I had thought of that myself."

It was right, Miss Rossiter knew, that Edith should come to her sick daughter, and she gave her consent graciously, though there was in her heart a feeling of aversion to the woman who had taken Emily's place, and whom she had always disliked. Still in her own house she must be polite and courteous, and she received Mrs. Schuyler kindly, and made her rest awhile and take some refreshment before she went to Gertie, who was sleeping and must not be disturbed.

"She would not know you, though she talks of you sometimes," Miss Rossiter said, "and you must be careful not to excite her in the least."

Edith promised to do whatever Miss Rossiter thought was proper.

"Only let me go to her at once," she said. "You know I have not seen her in nineteen years, and *she* my own child, too."

"Not seen her? What do you mean?" Miss Rossiter asked, a suspicion of Edith's sanity crossing her mind.

"I mean I have not seen her, knowing she was my daughter," Edith replied, as she followed to the room where Gertie lay so white and still, her bright hair tucked away beneath a silken net, a red fever spot on cheek and lips, and her hands folded upon her bosom just as she kept them for the most of the time while with Godfrey she went sailing over the golden sea to the country so far away.

She was on her journey thither when Edith came in, and, parting the curtains cautiously, stood looking at her, while in fancy she was a young girl again in the dreary room in Dorset Street, and the rain plashed against the windows, and ran down the panes in dirty streams, and the roar of the great city sounded in her ears, and she heard the lodgers' steps upon the stairs, and her baby was in her arms, nestled so close to her that she felt the warm, tender flesh against her own, just as she felt that of the sick girl, whose face and neck, and hands she touched so carefully, and yet with such a world of love and tenderness, as she whispered to herself :

"Little girley, little baby, little Gertie, my very own little one, you are changed since that dreadful day so many years ago, but I know that you are mine. They took you from me when I was asleep, and now, when I see you again, I find you sleeping too. Darling little child, do you know it is your mother standing here and talking to you thus? Will you ever know, ever open your eyes on me and call me mother? Oh, Father in Heaven, spare her to me,—spare my precious child!" This was what the colonel heard Edith say; for, feeling anxious for her, he stood just outside the door, and when her voice ceased and he heard a rustling sound, he went in, and, supporting her with his arm as she sank into a chair, held her head upon his bosom, and soothed her tenderly.

It was strange the effect Edith's presence in the sick-room had upon Miss Rossiter. She had fully indorsed Gertie,—ay, had in some sort adopted her in her own mind, and could not bear that another should share her watch and care and anxiety for the only sick person in whom she had ever been so deeply interested. But as soon as Edith's tears were dried, and she was herself again, the calm, quiet dignity of the mother asserted itself, and Miss Rossiter, who was not the mother, was compelled to stand aside while another took her place and did the thousand little things which only a mother could have thought to do.

And Edith did not grow tired with constant watching. On the contrary, both strength and flesh came back to her, and, when at last the fever turned, and she knew her child would live, she gained faster than Gertie, and it seemed to the colonel that she grew young and fair and smooth each day until it was very hard to believe her the mother of the sick girl, who, with the marks of disease upon her face, looked her nineteen years.

The sea was not so placid now, the boat was tossing on the waves, and Gertie sat alone on deck, and called in vain for Godfrey, who had deserted his post and was nowhere to be found, until one morning, when he came bodily, the wreck of his former self, and climbing the stairs to Gertie's room, bent

over her with words of love which penetrated to her dull ear, and must in part have been comprehended.

After that Godfrey stayed in Miss Rossiter's house, which seemed a sort of hospital, and was so distasteful to Miss Julia, when at last she came from Florida, that she accepted her Uncle Calvert's invitation, and went to the *poky* house on Washington Square, where the Sixth Avenue cars on one side, and the University on the other, nearly drove her wild with the never-ending tinkle of their bells.

Julia had heard every particular of the story before she came home, for her father had written it to her, and had told her of Gertie's illness, and Edith's presence in Miss Rossiter's house. Thus her first surprise and indignation had had time to abate, and now she was in a kind of bewildered state, incapable of realizing anything to the full, except the fact that in some sort her aunt had gone over to the enemy, leaving her alone on the old vantage ground of dislike and opposition to *that woman* through whom all this had come upon them. Fortunately, however, for Julia, her mind was just then occupied with thoughts of a Southern bachelor, who had offered himself and his reputed half million for her acceptance. This offer she was duly considering when she came home, and after seeing how matters were at her Aunt Christine's, and staying a day or two in the dark old house in Washington Square, she nearly made up her mind to accept it, though the man was forty and bored her nearly to death with his twaddling talk about his horses and dogs. She had not seen Edith during the one day and night spent at Miss Rossiter's, neither had she mentioned her name or inquired for Gertie, except to ask if the fever was considered catching, and how her aunt liked having her house turned into a hospital! Of this indifference Edith knew nothing, and would not have cared if she had. All her thoughts were centred in that little, white-faced girl slowly groping her way back to life and reason, and talking now far more than she had done at first when the water was so still and the boat sailed so steadily. She was saved; she would live; there was no question about that, and Edith had only to wait patiently for the day when the

blue eyes would first look at her with recognition in their glance, and the dear voice call her mother.

Miss Rossiter had given her Gertie's message, and she knew the words by heart, and repeated them to herself as she watched for the first faint sign of reason. It was on a pleasant April day, and the windows of the room were open, and the sun shone softly upon the plants which Miss Rossiter had placed outside the windows, where they made quite a little garden.

Edith had been up all night, and was still sitting across the room, leaning her tired head upon her hand, when a sound caught her ear and brought her to her feet, where she stood listening intently, wondering if she could be mistaken, or had she heard the blessed name *mother*, and was she the mother meant and Gertie's the voice which called her.

"Mother, my mother," it came again, and then Edith glided across the floor, and parting the silken hangings to the bed looked eagerly in.

Gertie was awake, and sane, and thinking herself alone had tried to put things together and remember where she was, and what it was she heard *long ago*, which made her so glad.

"Oh, I know I have a mother," she said to herself, and it was this word Edith caught.

"Mother, my mother," Gertie said again, delighted to repeat the dear name, and then it was that Edith parted the curtains and looked in upon her.

Oh, the rapturous joy of that first long gaze when eye met eye, and told without the aid of words the mighty love there was between the mother and the child meeting as such for the first time in the full sense of the relation. My pen cannot describe it, neither should it if it could, for there are some scenes over which a veil must be thrown, and this is one of them. Suffice it to say that Edith was perfectly satisfied with Gertie's reception of her, and when, an hour later, Colonel Schuyler looked into the room he found them fast asleep, both heads on the same pillow, Edith's arms around Gertie's neck, and one of Gertie's pale, wan hands resting on Edith's face. This picture touched the colonel, and he cried softly to himself as he stood gazing at

the two, so like each other in their sleep that he wondered he had never seen the resemblance before. Then he called Miss Rossiter, who came and looked, and cried a little too ; but neither spoke a word, and after a moment's silence went out together, and closing the door left them alone together, the mother and her child.

CHAPTER LXI.

GODFREY AND GERTIE.

HOWARD, come here, I wish to speak to you," Miss Rossiter said, in the quick, decided way she had assumed since so much had been depending upon her, and she had been drawn out of herself. "Howard, what do you mean to do with Gertie? Will you make her really one of your children, and have her share equally with them?"

"Really, Christine, I have not thought; it's a little too soon for that. Why, yes, I rather think—she will share with them,—yes, if Godfrey marries Alice, there would then be more reason why Gertie should share equally, as Godfrey would not need so much, and you know I have had some heavy losses."

"Howard, don't be a fool. Godfrey will never marry Alice, nor anybody else except Gertie Westbrooke, and you know that, or ought to know it. I learned it those days I took care of him when Gertie was with me, and I got to liking her in spite of myself. I am not a deceitful woman, Howard, and I will not say that I am altogether satisfied with Edith. It is not in my nature to feel that people of her rank in life are fully my equals, but I shall always treat her well for Gertie's sake and Godfrey's. I cannot understand it, but that child has grown strangely into my heart since she has been sick here in my house. They say we always love what has cost us trouble and made us forget ourselves, and I think I love her better than I have loved anything since Charlie died, and I intend to make her my *heir*, and if she only would stay with me I'd keep her so gladly. I have told you this, Howard, so that *money* need not

stand between you and your consent for Godfrey to make Gertie his wife."

Colonel Schuyler was astonished, and could hardly believe that it was Christine Rossiter speaking to him, as this woman spoke, and actually pleading Gertie's cause, and advising him to accept her as the wife of his son. In spite of Miss Rossiter's talk of adoption and heirship, he felt a pang of regret when he remembered the Creighton line of ancestry, almost as pure as his own, and thought of Jenny Nesbitt, who seemed destined to be connected with him in so many ways through Edith and Emma and Godfrey. But there was no help for it. The star of the Lyles was in the ascendant, and when, that afternoon, Godfrey went up to see Gertie for the first time since her return to consciousness, he had his father's full consent to claim her for his wife.

The colonel himself had told Godfrey the story of Gertie's birth, and Godfrey had *hurrahed* for very joy, feeling that in some way Gertie was thus brought nearer to him. He knew of her coming alone to him in his illness and braving the world because she thought herself his sister. He had faint reminiscences, too, of soft hands which cooled his burning brow, of loving words breathed into his ear, and of firm, though gentle remonstrances and threats of leaving him, when the vessel plunged so fearfully and he was plunging with it. Gertie had saved his life, and even when he did not know she was in the room she had been constantly in his mind, and was with him in his desperate voyage over the stormy sea, where he had so nearly been lost. Always, when the waves were doing their worst, there was a thought in his heart of *La Sœur*, and he wondered how she was coming through, and if the window was open in her dingy little stateroom. Hers was the first name upon his lips when he awoke to consciousness; and before he was really able he left his room and went to Miss Rossiter's, to be near his darling and see her when he chose. But she had never known him when he bent over her with fond words and loving caresses; and she talked of him to his face, and mourned sadly that he was lost, and she was left to sail alone over the troubled waters.

"I am here, Gertie. I shall never leave you again," he had

said to her once, when she could not understand his meaning, and now he was going to say it again, with every obstacle cleared from his path, and nothing to impede his love.

Gertie was sitting up and expecting him, but she was not prepared for the impetuosity with which he gathered her in his arms, and hugging her so close that her breath came in quick gasps, carried her to the mirror, and laying her white, thin face beside his own, which, if possible, was whiter and thinner, bade her see what a "pair of picked chickens they were."

"But we weathered it, Gertie," he said, "and now we've nothing to do but grow strong and well again, and you will be more beautiful than ever, while I,—well, Gertie, I never was so happy in my life as at this moment when I hold you thus and kiss you, so—and so!"

He emphasized his words by kisses, which took Gertie's breath away, and when she could speak she said imploringly, "Please, Godfrey, put me down. You tire, you hurt me."

Then he placed her in her chair, and kneeling at her side, held her hands in his, and looking anxiously into her face, said, "Forgive me, darling, I did not think how weak you were, and I am so happy, for I have father's consent for you to tell me yes. I really have, and you are my own forever. 'Tell Gertie,' father said, 'that I release her from her promise and welcome her as my daughter.' Will you kiss me now, Gertie, even if I am *not* a perfect gentleman?"

"You are not deceiving me, Godfrey?" Gertie said, her lips quivering as she thought how terrible it would be to have this new cup of joy dashed from her lips just as she was ready to drink it.

"Deceiving you! No. Father *did* say so, and Allie knows it, too; and fickle, like all her sex, will not break her heart for me, who, she says, look like a fright with my shaved head, and high cheek-bones, and loose clothes. You see the fever has not left me very good-looking, and Marks, the rector at Hampstead, is down at Uncle Calvert's, and rode with Allie yesterday; and I should not be surprised if she were yet to make aprons for Mrs. Van's babies, and carry soup to the old lady. She'll be a splendid wife for a minister, if she makes up her mind to it."

He had rattled on thus volubly for the sake of giving Gertie time in which to recover herself, and when he saw that her breath came more naturally and the color was dying away from her cheeks, he returned to the matter in question.

"Kiss me, Gertie, gentleman or not, and I shall know you are my wife."

He held his face close to hers, and Gertie put her arms around his neck, and so they were betrothed at last ; and when, half an hour later, Edith came in, she found Gertie with her head resting on Godfrey's arm and an expression of perfect peace upon her face, while he talked to her in tones which no one who had ever known experimentally the meaning of love could mistake.

"Ah, mother !" he said, as Edith came up to him. "You are really my mother now, for Gertie is mine, and the Lyles are pretty well mixed with the Schuylers, I think."

How happy he was, and how he hovered around Gertie, seeming almost to devour her with his eyes when his lips were not meeting hers, and when he told Miss Rossiter the good news, he kissed her, too, and swung her round as if she had been a top, and wanted to kiss his father, and did kiss Julia and Alice both when he went to call upon them that evening, and told them he was as good as a married man.

Alice had given him up since the day Miss Rossiter drove down to see her, and talked so affectionately of Gertie, and said nothing would please her better than to see her Godfrey's wife. There had been a few tears in private, a wrench or two in her heart, and then it was all over ; for Allie's love had never been very strong, and but little more than her pride was wounded when Gertie was preferred to herself. Alice had one good trait,—she did not long harbor malice or resentment ; and she received Godfrey cordially, and said she hoped he would be happy, and blushed rather prettily when he joked her about the parson, and said she might possibly be his neighbor in Hampstead.

Two weeks from that day the doors and windows at Schuyler Hill were opened wide, and Mrs. Tiffe, in a wild state of excitement and expectancy, was giving the most contradictory orders to the servants, and flitting from room to room to see

that all was in readiness for the family, who were coming home and would be there to dinner. Everybody in Hampstead knew the story now, and none liked Edith the less, but rather the more, I think ; while the fact that Gertie was to marry Godfrey filled every one with joy, except Tom Barton, who came to the Hill the day we were expecting her, and, handing me a bunch of pansies and English violets, said :

" They are for her room. I always associate her with English violets. She is just as sweet as they are, Heaven bless her ! "

There was a tremor in his voice and his hand shook as he gave me the flowers. He was taking it hard, and I pitied him so much when he said :

" There is nothing in the wide world for me to live for now ; but I shall *not* go back to my cups. She helped make me a man, and I'll keep so for her sake ; but I tell you, Ettie, it is pretty tough sledding, and there is a lump in my heart as big as a bass drum. I wish I were dead ; I do, upon my word. "

How sweet the perfume of those violets was, and how eagerly Gertie inhaled it when she came at last, and I took her to her room.

" Tom brought them. He says they are like you, " I said, while a shadow flitted over Gertie's face, for she knew just how much Tom Barton loved her, and felt in part the burden weighing him down so heavily.

It was curious to watch Edith as she came back to her home, with something of humility and fear in her manner, as if she dreaded the meeting of her old acquaintance now that they knew of the deception which had been practised so long, and it was equally curious to see how the colonel sustained and upheld her, and stood by her, and treated her with a consideration and increased deference and tenderness which would have precluded anything like coolness or indifference on the part of his friends toward his wife had they felt disposed to manifest it, which they were not. Edith was too popular ; too much a favorite with all classes at Hampstead for anything except positive wrong to make a difference now ; and the very first evening of her return many of her old acquaintances came to see her and offer their congratulations for the finding of her daughter, and that daughter Gertie.

How happy we were that night when Edith and Gertie sat together upon the sofa, the daughter's head resting upon the mother's shoulder, and the colonel and Godfrey standing behind and bending protectingly over them. Even Julia, who had come with the party, was unusually gracious, and told me confidentially that though she would have advised secrecy with regard to Gertie's father, she was tolerably well satisfied with matters as they were, especially as Major Camden did not care, and she should soon be away from it all.

The next day was Sunday, and Mr. Marks had no cause to complain of empty pews, for every place was filled long before the bell sounded its last note and the Schuyler carriage drew up before the door. It did not matter that the villagers had seen Edith and Gertie and Godfrey hundreds of times, there was about them now a new element of interest, and the people came from other churches to see the wonderful sight. But they were in part doomed to disappointment, for Gertie was still too weak to venture out, while Godfrey would not go without her, and so, only Edith was there, her beautiful head drooping a little, and her eyes cast timidly down as she walked to her accustomed place and dropped upon her knees, where she remained a long, long time, while all through the church there was a solemn hush as the people watched her, many with tearful eyes, and all with a feeling that they knew the nature of her prayers and sympathized with her.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE WEDDING.

IT took place early in October, on the morning when I commenced this story ; and when from my chamber-window I saw the bridal train go by, and heard the pealing of the merry marriage-bells, and the shouting of the children from the mission-school, who strewed the bride's path from the carriage to the church with flowers, and to whom God-

they promised a *fête* upon the lawn, with all the candy and ice-cream they could eat, when he returned from his journey. Never before, nor since, was the church so full as it was that lovely October morning, when the maples were turning scarlet, and the walnut trees were golden in the autumnal sunshine, which fell so softly and warmly, as if in blessing, on the beautiful young bride and the perfectly happy groom.

There was a trip to the West as far as Denver, and then one day in November, the bridal pair came back to Hampstead, where the bells rang merrily in honor of their return ; and the boys of the mission-school, remembering the promised candy and ice-cream, made a bonfire in the street, and hurrahed lustily for Mr. Godfrey Schuyler, and a tiger, too !

They had their *fête*, and candy and cream, and ate it in the November rain ; but not until after the grand party at the Hill, which, for elegance and expenditure, far outdid the one given a few years before, when Edith was the bride, and Gertie the little unknown girl, watching the ladies as they came, and wishing that she was one of them.

She *was* one of them now, or rather *the* one around whom everything else centred, and I never saw a creature so dazzlingly beautiful as she was in her bridal robes, when, with Godfrey at her side, she stood to receive the guests. Everybody who had been bidden was there,—except the Bartons, from whom there came a note of regret, saying that “sudden and severe illness in the family would keep them at home.”

“Who can it be ? Not Rosamond, for she wrote the regret,” Gertie said ; and then, as her eyes met mine, we both thought of Tom, who had never been seen in town since the morning of Gertie’s bridal.

He was present at the ceremony and stood where he could look in Gertie’s face, and it was said by those who watched him that at the words, “I, Gertrude, take thee, Godfrey, to be my wedded husband,” he put up his hand and started as if smitten heavily. He came to me after it was over, and said, in a half-laughing, half-serious way, that there was a feeling in his stomach as if a hornet’s nest had been stirred up, and each individual hornet

was doing its best to sting him ! I know Gertie thought of him many times that night when she moved a queen amid the brilliant throng, where only one vied with her at all in point of loveliness, and that one, her mother, who, with every shadow lifted from her heart, seemed to have recovered all the beauty of her early womanhood. Edith's dress was a heavy silk of a creamy tint, with overskirt and bertha of soft, rich lace, while at Gertie's request she wore her hair in curls, arranged at the back of her head, and held by a coral comb. Coral was very becoming to Edith, and she looked so young and handsome that none would ever have dreamed that she was mother to the bride. They were like two sisters, and the colonel might have passed for the father of them both. He seemed very proud of Edith, and in his eyes, which followed her constantly, there was a world of love and tenderness, which told how dear she was to him, even now that everything pertaining to her early life was known to him and the world.

Later in the evening, when the dancing began to flag a little, and the New York belles had one after another tried Gertie's new Steinway, Edith was persuaded to take her seat at the piano.

"Give us one of those sweet, plaintive little airs you sang at Oakwood," Godfrey said, as he bent over her.

Edith had never tried so much as a single note since the day when she learned from her mother that her daughter was alive, but something told her she could sing now, for the iron fingers were gone forever ; and selecting a German song, which a year before would have been far beyond her power, she began to sing,--her voice, which had once been so rich, and full, and strong, gathering strength, and depth, and power as she progressed, and soaring up, and up, and up, ever clear, ever sweet, ever ringing, until the whole house was full of melody, and the guests came flocking in to hear.

"Edith, my darling," and "mamma, mamma," were said in the same breath of astonishment as the music ceased, and Gertie and the colonel laid a hand on Edith's shoulder. "I never dreamed you had a voice like that. I am prouder of you to night than ever I was before," the colonel said, as at a sign

from Edith, who was looking very white, he led her away from the piano and out upon a balcony, where she stood a moment to recover herself, and force down the rapid beating of her heart ere she told him *why* she could not sing before, and that with the confession of everything, and the finding of Gertie, her glorious voice had come back to her again.

CHAPTER LXIII.

MARY ROGERS' LETTER TO EDITH.

FIVE days after the bridal party at Schuyler Hill Edith and Gertie sat together in the boudoir of the latter talking of the Providence which had thrown them so constantly together, and of the way in which they were at last made known to each other.

"I have often thought of the night Mrs. Rogers died," Edith said, and I think there must have been something on her mind which she wished to tell me about you. Do you suppose she could have known you were my child?"

"No, she could not have kept it so many years," Gertie said, "and yet I can remember many things she used to say about my parentage, which I interpret differently now from what I did when my thoughts were all in another channel."

"One would have supposed that knowing as she must have known her liability to sudden death she would have left some writing which might throw light upon your history. You are sure she did not?" Edith said, and Gertie replied:

"Yes, sure; or at least I think I am. Norah and I looked over everything carefully at the time, and there was nothing but a bundle of old letters and receipts."

"Did you destroy them?" Edith asked, and Gertie answered her:

"No, I have them still in the box where I keep the souvenirs of my childhood. I'll bring them, if you like, though I am quite sure that there is nothing in them."

The box was brought and opened, and Gertie began to ex

amine the papers more carefully than ever before. There were dressmakers' bills and grocers' bills and landlords' bills, and music bills for Gertie and letters to "John Rogers, Birmingham," and then Gertie came upon a fresher-looking envelope, the seal of which had not been broken, and on which, in Mary Rogers' hand, was written : "For Mrs. Edith Schuyler, if I die suddenly."

"Oh-h—yes—here—it must be this?" Gertie gasped, as she passed the package to Edith, whose heart beat with an undefined dread lest after all there might be some mistake and her darling be wrested from her.

"Shall I read it, or you?" she said, and Gertie replied :

"You ;—but read aloud, if you please. I cannot wait to know."

Edith could not read it aloud, and Gertie did not wait, but leaning over her mother's shoulder read the letter with her. It was as follows :

"HAMPSTEAD, *April* 10, 18—.

"MRS. COL. SCHUYLER—MADAME : Warned by a twinge in my heart and about my vitals that I may be taken away suddenly, I am going to commit to paper the true history of Gertrude Westbrooke, the girl known as my adopted child. Mrs. Schuyler, did you ever hear of a young girl,—who came one day with her mother to a dreary lodging in Dorset Street, London? They had the back rooms looking into a dirty court, and the girl had a baby born there, a little girl baby, with eyes like robin's eggs.

"There was a housemaid, who waited on the ladies in No. — ; her name was Mary Stover, and she admired the young lady so much, and was curious about her, especially after the birth of the baby. That housemaid was *me*, and the lady was *you*, whom your mother called Heloise. She was Mrs. Fordham then, and I did not like her much, and after I accidentally heard what she said to you about sending the child away, I kept a watch on her.

"I was going to your room with a jug of water, and heard it all, and saw her the night she went out with a bundle under her

arm. I was sure the bundle was the baby, and, when she got back, I let myself out on to that little balcony under your window, and waited till I heard her tell you where she had taken the child. There certainly was a Providence in it that I had a sister nurse in that very hospital, and, to make sure your mother told you true, I got leave to go next day to see my sister.

"By a little management, I found that a girl baby had been left there the night before, with *Heloise* pinned on its dress, as Mrs. Fordham said, and that it was further marked on the bosom with a drop of blood. I got Anne to show the baby to me and knew it for the same I had seen in your room. You remember I tended it an hour or more once.

"I love children, and this one interested me more than I can tell; and I said to myself I'll keep watch of it, and the mother, too, and some time maybe I can unravel the mystery and bring them together. From what I overheard, I believed you had been married, and that your husband was dead, and that was all I knew of him. But I pitied you, and loved the child, and without telling Anne why, I made her promise to be very kind to the little one.

Mother lived in Dorset Street, too, and as she was very lonesome from week's end to week's end without us, I took the plan to have her take the baby for ours. It was hard work to bring her to it, and Anne opposed it, too; but something seemed to push me on and say that it must be done, and I got her consent, and she took *Heloise* to our house in No. —, where she was just like a little sunbeam, and it was hard to tell which loved her the most, mother, or Anne, or me. I claimed her for mine, and dressed her with my wages, and meant to bring her up above what we were, if I could. When you left Dorset Street I lost track of you for a while, but that only made me love baby more. Soon after you left I got another place, and a better one. I was waiting-maid to a Mrs. Westbrooke, who lived in a very fine place. She, too, had a baby girl named *Gertrude*, and, when it died suddenly of croup, I thought she would have mourned herself to death for it.

"About that time mother went off with cholera, and then !

told Mrs. Westbrooke about my baby, and asked if I might bring it and show it to her. You don't know how pretty she was, with her golden-red hair curling all over her head, and her sweet blue eyes. My lady got very fond of her the three days she stayed with me, and, when I spoke of carrying it away, she said :

“‘I do not believe I can let baby go. It seems like my own lost darling. Will you let me have her?’

“‘For your own?’ I said, and she answered :

“‘Yes, for my own.’

“This was just what suited me,—to see my pet grow up a lady,—and I told her yes, and as the master did not oppose it more than to say ‘that he did not care especially for other people’s brats, and this one must be kept out of his way,’ it was settled that baby should stay, and I do believe my mistress came to love it like her own. She gave it her lost baby’s name, and had it christened ‘Gertrude Heloise Westbrooke,’ so it sure would have a name. She was a sweet-tempered lady, but weak and nervous like. I think she had consumption, for nothing in particular appeared to ail her, only she was tired like all the time, and never could sleep nor get rested, and at last she died, and left an annuity of forty pounds a year to little Gertie, and said I was to have the care of her.

“About a year after her death the master married a fashionable, fussy little woman from Glasgow, who disliked children worse than he did, and never noticed Gertie in any way after she found out that she was not Mr. Westbrooke’s own. I was about to be married myself, and asked the master if I might have the child. He was more than willing, and so I took her to my own comfortable home on the second floor of a house in what is now Abingdon Road, but was then Newland Street. All this time I had not been able to track you, though I never went out that I did not look for you ; and many’s the time I drew my little girl to the gardens of Kensington and even to Hyde Park, where I sat by the hour watching the people as they went by in hopes of seeing you. But I never did, and I had almost given it up, when one day in October I went into a linen-

draper's on High Street to get a new slip for my darling. The girls were all very busy, and I had to wait a bit, and was looking at the dresses in the window when I heard some one say, 'Isn't she beautiful?' and looking up I saw you coming in. I knew you in a moment, though you was handsomer than ever, and looking well and strong. In my excitement I forgot what I had come to get, but stood watching you, my heart beating so loud I was afraid you might hear it.

"I do not remember what you bought, but you ordered it sent to 'Mrs. Dr. Barrett's, No. — Caledonia Street,' and then left the shop, while I followed close behind. You turned into that shady lane or road which leads past the Holland House to Bayswater, and I kept as near you as I could without attracting your attention. Once you sat down under a tree as if you were tired, and going a little further on I sat down too, and watched you when you did not know it. There was a pretty little girl about Gertie's age playing near, and I remember you called her to you, and smoothed her curls, and caressed her little hands, and asked her for her name, and when she went back to her nurse there was a sad, sorry look in your eyes and on your face, and I said to myself, 'Is she thinking of the baby, I wonder?'

"I knew from Anne that a woman in deep black, with her vail drawn closely over her face had been to the hospital to inquire after it, and had seemed relieved when told it had been taken by a woman who was sure to be kind to it. I was certain the lady in black was your mother, but could not tell whether she had ever inquired again for the child. I meant to know for sure where you lived, and if Caledonia Street was your home; so when you got up, which you did after a time, I got up too, and kept close behind till you reached Notting Hill station. I was standing by you when you got your ticket, and took the same carriage you did, and alighting at the same station, followed you to your very door, and saw you go in like one who was at home. There was a baker's shop near by, and I bought some bread and buns which I did not want, and questioned the girl who waited upon me with regard to the houses in the neigh-

borhood, pretending I was looking for one to rent. In this way I learned that the Mrs. Dr. Barrett who lived at No. — took lodgers, and had a beautiful daughter, a Miss Lyle, the child of a first marriage, the girl supposed, as old Dr. Barrett, who had owned the place for a long time, had only been married to the present Mrs. Barrett two or three years when he died. So much I learned, and then I left the place for home, determining to keep track of you after that, and not lose sight of you again. I knew when you were governess at Allanbanke, and when you played the organ in — church, and used sometimes on Sundays to take Gertie there to listen to the music, but never gave her a hint as to who the musician was. There was a kind of pleasant excitement in watching you and feeling that I had your secret, and I enjoyed it to the full.

“At last you were lost to me for a while,—I nursed my husband in his last sickness, but greatly to my delight you unexpectedly turned up again at the very house where my cousin Norah was living as lady's-maid,—at Oakwood, you know. I saw you there one evening when I was calling on Norah, and learned that you were Mrs. Sinclair's companion, and was going abroad with her. As Norah, too, was to go with her mistress, I was certain to know when you returned, and I did, and saw you dressed for dinner one day, and thought you the most beautiful woman I ever saw. I was a widow then. My husband had been dead some time, but he had left me quite comfortable for a woman of my class, while Gertie's annuity was sufficient for her. I was anxious that she should have a good education, and I tried to bring her up a lady so far as I knew myself. Just *what* I intended to do, or whether I should ever let you know of her existence, had now become a matter of some doubt, for I loved the girl too well to part with her willingly. She was the very apple of my eye, and I said unless something happens to me, or her mother marries rich, I will keep the secret all my life. Still I liked to be near you,—to know just what you were doing, and so I applied to your mother for apartments, with what success you know. Then Colonel Schuyler came, and Norah told me of your probable

marriage with him, and I had a great battle with duty and my love for little Gertie. The first told me that when you was in a position to do for the child what I never could, I ought to give her up, while the last said I never could ; she was all the world to me, and I decided to keep her a spell at least, especially as through Norah it was so arranged that I was to go to America when you did. In any event I should have followed you after a while, and I thought it a special Providence which made my going with you so easy. You can imagine the interest I have felt in you and everything belonging to you, and how at times, when I saw my darling snubbed by the young ladies at the Hill, I have been tempted to claim her right to be there as their equal and companion.

"I never could tell whether Colonel Schuyler knew that such a child ever had existence. If he did not, and your passing for Miss Lyle instead of Mrs. made me suspect that he did not, I thought it would be a cruel thing for me to tell it to him, and that of itself might have kept me from it, even if I had loved Gertie less. If it was not for this frequent pain which warns me of sudden death, I should perhaps keep the secret forever ; but I must not leave my little girl alone if anything happens to me, and so I write it down, begging you to take her and do justice to her, for I swear to Heaven she is the child born in Dorset Street, Jan. —, 18—, of the young woman Heloise or Edith Lyle, whose mother called herself Mrs. Fordham, and left the baby on the steps of the — Street Hospital.

"Perhaps you need not confess the truth to your husband, if he does not already know it, but you can at least *adopt* Gertie, and treat her as your own, and this I beg of you to do.

"And now I have told you all I know. Who Gertie's father was, or where he died, is a secret to me ; only this is sure, the girl known as Gertie Westbrooke is your own daughter, and may God deal with you and prosper you according as you deal with her when I am gone.

"Written this day at Hampstead, and sworn to solemnly by me before the Eye which sees me, and which knows what I say is true.

MARY ROGERS.'

Had Edith needed proof of Gertie's identity, she had it in this letter, but she did not, and clasping the beautiful girl in her arms, she burst into a paroxysm of tears, moaning softly "My darling, my baby; it seems like a dream, and God has been so good to keep you all the time and bring you at last to me. Oh, if mother could have known! She loved you from the time you went to lodge with her in London."

"Mamma," Gertie said suddenly, "she did know! I am sure of it, or she must have guessed. It was the night she died, when I was sitting with her, and accidentally mentioned my birthmark,—that drop of blood. I remember how excited she grew, and how hard she tried to tell me something, but could not. It must have been her suspicion of the truth."

"Perhaps so. I would like to believe she knew it," Edith answered, and then she told her daughter of the Lyles across the sea in Alnwick; the sweet-faced old lady, and the bare-armed Jenny, who had so shocked and disgusted her. Gertie was interested in the grandmother at once, and proposed writing to her immediately, and telling her that the son whom she had mourned so long had left a child who would some day find her in her humble home, and call her grandmamma.

This plan Edith did not oppose, but before Gertie could write there came a letter from Robert Macpherson, saying that Mrs. Lyle was dead and the cottage vacant, for Mr. Nesbit had taken his wife and children to the north of Scotland, where his boyhood was passed. As Gertie had no particular interest in Jenny, her letter was not written, but through her influence provision was made for the education of Jennie's children, especially the boy, who bore Godfrey's name.

CHAPTER LXIV.,

AND LAST.

THE Schuylers all remained in Hampstead the winter after Gertie's marriage, and our little town was the pleasanter and gayer for it. Only one sad thing occurred,—and that, the death of poor Tom, which took place about Christmas time, when we were hanging our garlands of evergreens in the church and making ready for our annual festival. I was sitting by Gertie working upon the same wreath, when the news was brought to us, and I saw the tears, which came with a rush to her eyes, and knew she was thinking of the hopeless love which had, no doubt, shortened poor Tom's life.

"Tell Gertie," he said to his sister, when the death-sweat was on his brow, and his utterance was thick and indistinct; "tell Gertie I loved her till the last, and blessed her with my dying breath, for she helped make me a man. But for her I should fill a drunkard's grave and meet a drunkard's doom. She warned me of my peril; she led me back from the brink of ruin; and if I am saved, as I hope to be, I shall be a star in her crown of glory, as the sinner whom she converted from his evil ways. Heaven bless her, and Godfrey, too; they are worthy of each other."

These were Tom's last words, and Gertie cried as if her heart would break when Rosamond repeated them to her the week after Tom's funeral when she came to say good-by. They were going away from the Ridge House, Rosamond said, and the place was for sale. She wished Godfrey would buy it; she would rather see him and Gertie there than strangers, who had never known or cared for her and her mother.

The idea of a home of her own was a pleasant one to Gertie, and a few days after Godfrey rode up to the Ridge to confer with Mrs. Barton. But another had been before him and bought the place, and some time in February was to take possession.

Godfrey's horse never galloped a distance of two miles and

a half more swiftly than on that day when his rider was charged with so important news.

"Gertie, Gertie, I say, where are you? Look here!" he exclaimed, as he bolted into the room where she was sitting. "Guess how the rector proposes to keep Lent! What cross is he going to bear!"

Gertie could only look at him in surprise, while he went on :

"He has bought the Ridge House, and is going to take a wife, just before Ash-Wednesday! Think of Alice Creighton running a sewing society and having a church sociable!"

It was as Godfrey said, Alice was to be *Rev. Mrs. Marks*, and live at the Ridge House, which her money bought, and the fitting up of which she came to superintend a few days after the story was out. She had written to me asking permission to stop with us while she remained in Hampstead, and I was expecting the little lady, when both Gertie and Godfrey interfered, and begged so hard for her to stop with them that she yielded to their entreaties and went to Schuyler Hill, where Godfrey nearly teased her life out of her, and was far more attentive to her than he had been during the short period of his engagement. Even Mr. Marks himself was scarcely more interested than Godfrey in the house, which Alice furnished in accordance with her own extravagant notions.

"It was not as if she was poor and dependent upon her husband's salary," she said, and so she made a little palace of a home for her future lord, who assented to whatever she suggested, and seemed so excited and absent-minded after she was gone, that we were glad when toward the last of February a young student from New York came up to officiate at St. Luke's while the rector took a short vacation.

He was absent nearly two weeks,—and when he came back to us Alice was with him, and astonished us all with her wonderful outfit, her tall ruffs which reached to her ears, dresses which trailed a yard, sleeveless jackets of every device and color, and her hair, gotten up in a most remarkable manner. She said that she married *Mr. Marks*, and not *his people*, consequently nothing more must be expected of her as *Mrs. Marks* than she

had been willing to render as Miss Creighton. But Alice was fond of "running things," as Godfrey called it, and she had not been with us a month before she was head and front of the sewing-school for the poor children, and first manager of the Church Home, and secretary of the temperance club for the young men of the working class, and had established a reading-room which she controlled entirely. Indeed she seemed in a fair way to revolutionize the town; and though she never approached to anything like familiarity with her husband's parishioners, she was far more popular and better liked as Mrs. Marks than she had been as Alice Creighton, and when at the Easter festival several children were baptized three of them took her name, Alice Creighton Marks!

Some time in March there was another wedding at the Hill and Julia was the bride. She had accepted Major Camden, and started at once for his home among the pines of Carolina. All that spring and the ensuing summer Godfrey and Gertie stayed at Schuyler Hill, and when the autumn came they went down to New York and took possession of the handsome house which Miss Rossiter had bought and the colonel furnished for them.

It is very lonely and quiet now at Schuyler Hill, but Edith goes often to New York to visit Gertie in her beautiful home, where Miss Rossiter spends more than half her time, and where there is to be a family reunion when the Centennial guns are firing in honor of our nation's hundredth birthday. Julia is coming from the south, and Robert and Emma from over the sea, and with them the little Highland lady they have named Edith Lyle, and so I finish the story commenced more than a year ago, when the October haze was on the hills and the music of marriage bells was sounding in my ears.

ESTHER OLIVIA ARMSTRONG.

THE END.

